

M A R I A:

A N O V E L.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

GEORGE BATEMAN.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC.LXXXV.



M A R I A.

C H A P T E R I.

IT was my father who entered ; and with him a young man of an appearance tolerably genteel, notwithstanding a certain carelessness in his dress and deportment that bordered upon slovenliness. This person my father introduced to me by the name of Railton, telling me in a whisper, he was the gentleman he had heretofore said he should bring to see me. At first my vexation and embarrassment at the presence of a stranger

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almost

almost deprived me of the power of complying with the customary forms of good-breeding; but a moment's recollection made me in a certain degree rejoice at it, since it would, in all probability, sooner deprive me of the company of Lord Henry, which was now become truly painful to me.

Lord Henry perceiving it impossible to converse farther with me, summoned all the resolution he could command, and withdrew; the look he gave me at that moment strongly painted to me his mortification at this interruption, and his extreme affliction at leaving me without having obtained any confession in his favour that might warrant hope. That look! oh heavens, it now rises to my view!—forgive my weakness, amiable Miss Mordaunt—pity my want of fortitude—but do not let this burst of tears lessen me in your esteem.

“Oh, do not conceive me so lost to humanity,”

humanity," said Maria, mingling her tears with those of Miss Hampden, "as not to feel most poignantly a situation so cruelly embarrassing."

Maria having wiped away the tears that bedewed the cheeks of her fair and unfortunate friend, begging her not to dwell on particulars which affected her so forcibly—Miss Hampden proceeded as follows :

In returning this parting compliment of Lord Henry, I took the precaution of suppressing his title, fearing to increase the curiosity of Railton, who I thought observed the countenances of both my lord and myself with a scrutinizing eye.

When his lordship had left us, my father inquired who he was:—I answered with an air somewhat confused—"A near relation of Mrs. G——."

"I think," said Mr. Railton, "I never saw a more striking resemblance

than that young gentleman bears to the C—— family.”

I blushed, I hesitated, I had drawn myself into a dilemma from which I knew not how to extricate myself: concluding however, from the manner in which he spoke, that he had some knowledge of the person of Lord Henry, I was going to add, that he was the second son of the duke of C——; but it instantly occurred to me, that if he should *not* have known my lord, my having avoided mentioning at first to my father his rank, and having studiously used the appellative *Sir*, would of itself create suspicion in the mind of Railton, by inducing him to think I wished to conceal from him and my father the quality of my guest. I mention this circumstance so particularly, because you will find it was afterwards of some consequence in my affairs.

In order to prevent further conversation

tion on this subject, I asked Mr. Railton the news of the day ; upon which he began to entertain me with sundry pieces of very curious and scandalous intelligence, but collected from the conduct of those who are said to form the politest circles. After which he descended to the amours—matrimonial adventures—disputes with the managers, &c. &c. of the actors and actresses ; to all which (as I happened to know but few of the characters in high life he had mentioned, otherwise than by name, and was totally unacquainted with theatres and theatrical people) I paid but little attention ; and not unfrequently, I am afraid, uttered the customary ejaculations—good heavens !—bless me !—certainly—to be sure—yes, yes—&c. &c. not a little *mal apropos*. Mr. Railton however did not perceive my inattention ; for as he was always perfectly satisfied with the brilliancy of his own *oral effusions*, he naturally

concluded every one else to be so. Having therefore (as he thought) greatly entertained me, he paused for some minutes:—after which, finding I did not endeavour to support the conversation with any degree of vivacity or attention, he said—with an air that implied, *As I have been entertaining you so long, you ought now to strive to do so by me—*

“I understand, Madam, that you are a great *genius*, and that you *write*; I should be happy to see some of your literary productions.”

“I have sometimes amused myself a little in that way,” said I, vexed at his request, “but I have no sort of claim to the epithet you honour me with, nor do I aspire to the title of an author.”

“Oh! you must not say so:—too much modesty is a great fault in a writer—If you have *written*, you will doubtless *publish*.”

“Is that an invariable consequence?” said I.

“Yes,

“Yes, now-a-days, Madam, as lightning precedes thunder:—Oh, you must publish!”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, Madam; but let me intreat you to favour me with a sight of your manuscripts.—I can’t exist a moment longer without you favour me with a sight of them.”

My father now insisted upon my showing the papers to Mr. Railton;—and therefore I complied, though much against my inclination. Mr. Railton praised my translations, protesting they had all the spirit and fire of their originals; but this compliment had no tendency to inflate my vanity, for I soon found that he was unacquainted with both languages; his erudition being confined pretty nearly to the knowledge of the lighter kinds of English poetry, plays, and the periodical prose writings of Addison, Swift, Pope, &c. &c. by

which reading he had picked up a smattering of criticism, and acquired a knack of scribbling with facility, without possessing any share of learning or real genius. After repeated eulogiums on two or three little poems of my *own writing*, he saw in the book into which I had copied the translations, he again adverted to his former position, namely, that I *must publish*.

"I would not have you though," continued he, "write poetry, for that does not sell equal to the time and trouble bestowed upon it.—You had better write for the stage; *that* is the easiest way to fame and fortune."

"But suppose I have no talent for dramatic writing?—I don't know that I have any, I am sure."

"Oh yes, I am sure you have;—undoubtedly you *must*; if you can write in one way, you can in another."

Depressed as my spirits were, I could
not

not forbear smiling at this speech; indeed I thought at first he had been in jest; but I was mistaken, and he went on very seriously thus:—

“Yes, yes, my dear Madam, the best way you can employ your talents, will be to write both a tragedy and a comedy, and then you will see which stile of writing you succeed in best, that is to say, which you write with the most ease and in the shortest time, that is the point; for in the profession of an author there is more to be got by *quantity* than *quality*:—You’ll get more by half a dozen indifferent things than by one *good* one.”

“Heavens!” said I.

“I think I would advise you to write a comedy:—Sprightly comedy is much wanted—we have generally three or four tragedies to one comedy.—Thalia appears but seldom;—if you could introduce her a few times with success

to the stage, you'd soon make your fortune.

"Indeed!" I replied, "that is a very inspiring consideration!"

"Oh, without doubt,—certainly,—I have no fear but you would make six or seven hundred a year with great ease;—for you need not be at the trouble to study for all your characters; you may buy them at any of the book-stalls."

"I don't comprehend you," said I.

"Why," returned he, "I'll tell you what I'd advise you to do,—and I assure you I would not take the trouble of communicating my thoughts to you if I had not the highest respect for your talents, and your sex,—especially as I am a dramatic writer myself."

I was impatient to hear this important communication; as, from what had already fallen from him on the subject of *authorship*, I concluded it must be infinitely curious.

"Pray

“ Pray be so kind,” said I, “ Sir, to favour me with your opinion.”

He answered me, as nearly as I can recollect, in the following words, or at least in words to the same effect :—

“ Why, Madam, if you mean to succeed, that is, to *write* a *great number* of pieces, and all with *effect*—which in other words is to say, *get a great deal of money*—you must take the following method of acquiring a facility in this species of composition : You must purchase all the old plays you meet with ;—you may pick a great many up for a trifling sum at different book-stalls. — When you have got them home, lay them on the floor, sit down in the middle of them, and never leave them (but at meal-times) till you have skimmed through them all ; by this means you will have acquired the dramatic *style* and *manner*, and having fixed upon a set of characters, from what you have read, you will have nothing then to do but a little to

disguise their features and put them into action. But you must be careful never to take two *situations* out of one comedy; no, that will be too palpable;—and be sure get the oldest plays you can rummage up. I know a great many people who have been ridiculous enough to copy the characters of modern play-writers; but that's a confounded foolish piece of business;—that will never do."

I looked very hard at Mr. Railton, to try if I could discover any traces of burlesque or satire in his countenance (for I really apprehended he had been ridiculing, tho' very unjustly, our modern comedies) but all was grave and earnest:—he continued his lecture with another admonition—

"There is one character that you must never fail to introduce in all your pieces, whether farce, opera, or pantomime;—but for this I believe you will find no model in the old plays."

"Pray,"

“ Pray,” said I, “ what sort of character must this be ? ”

“ Oh, one that will cost you very little trouble in the drawing ; as half his merit will consist in his wearing our naval uniform.”

“ And pray, Sir, of what humour must this blue-coated gentleman be ? and what kind of business in the piece is to be allotted to him ? ”

Oh, it is of very little consequence whether he possess any peculiarity of character or not ; nor at all material whether he does any thing towards bringing about the plot, or lets it alone : the chief point to be aimed at, is to take care that he appear in almost every scene, and has a sufficient number of well-rounded periods to *let off* about the glory of the English NAVY,—the bravery of British Tars,—the honour of old England,—the excellence of English roast beef,—the merit of drinking grog,—and the
beauty

beauty and virtue of English women,—with plentiful *sarcafms* on the French nation. All these things *tell* wonderfully.”

“*Tell*,” said I, “What do they tell?”

“That is a theatrical term,” said he, smiling, “to express that such and such things will please the upper gallery, and draw down thundering applause.”

More conversation of this kind passed, which I will not trouble you with; at length, to my great joy, he rose to depart, saying he should be late at the theatre, and that he was obliged to write a dramatic *critique* every night.

“I have not always troubled myself to go to the house,” said he, “but I believe I must in future make it a rule to go, for I have lately been very unlucky. The other evening I was half asleep when I took up the pen to write the *critique*, and not having been at the play, I inquired what had been represented, and

was

was told. As I knew by whom the principal characters of the play were usually performed, I sat down, without giving myself the trouble to examine the play-bill, and wrote a flaming panegyric on the actor in whose *interest* I was, and passed slightly over the great and uncommon merits of the gentleman who generally performed the other capital part.—It was dispatched to the press immediately.—But judge my vexation when I discovered, the next morning, that the *actors* had exchanged *parts* the night before;—of course my criticism attested to the public that I had not been present at the representation.”

“A terrible disgrace indeed,” said I, “How could you possibly get over it?”

“Oh, as to disgrace with the public, my dear Madam, we don’t so much mind that in our profession; however I brought myself off very well with the town, by inserting an erratum;—but the
most

most provoking part of the story is, that this erratum has ruined me with the gentleman whom (for certain pecuniary considerations) I was in duty bound to serve; for by this alteration the adulation I had so lavishly bestowed upon him, fell to the share of his theatrical rival, and the scanty half-praise, or rather detraction, I had designed for the latter, became the lot of the former.— But time flies—I must make haste to the theatre, or I may stand a chance of being in the same predicament again.— Adieu, my dear Madam;—I am your most devoted;—you may command my advice on any subject.”

So saying, he withdrew.

C H A P.

C H A P. II.

THE next day we received the following card.—“Mr. Railton presents compliments to Mr. and Miss Hampden, begs the favour of their company to tea to-morrow evening. The ingenious Mr. Blackwell and his lady will be of the party.”

I begged my father to send word that we were engaged, but he would not give ear to this request; he said that I should be highly to blame not to cultivate the acquaintance of Railton, who might be of the utmost service to me in the literary way. I could not see things in the light he did; but I acquiesced in his determination. When my father had written an answer to the card, I asked him

him if he knew the gentleman and lady mentioned by Railton.

"I am not acquainted with them," returned he, "but I have met them in company;—Mr. Blackwell is very well known as a man of great abilities; he is not a mere pretender like Railton; and I dare say you will like him very much; he has a great deal of wit and humour; and is reckoned a mighty good-hearted man; and his wife (though perhaps you may think her somewhat low-bred) from what I have seen of her, seems a decent sort of person."

"But I much wonder, Sir, the kind of man you describe Mr. Blackwell to be, should associate with so insignificant a smatterer as Railton."

"True, child; but I have seen him frequently in company with persons of less consequence, and far more ignorant than Mr. Railton, and that in preference, by what I have heard, to *better*."

A propensity

A propensity to low company is, I fear, too often seen in persons of distinguished talents; I can derive its origin from nothing but a VANITY of the grossest and most abject kind:—a love of being looked up to as the *informers* of their society. It is true, the *just* PRIDE of a man of true genius may be often a bar to his advancement in life, by prompting him to retreat, with a generous disdain, from the hand that might lead him to fame and fortune, when he thinks it ungracefully extended towards him. But if the *latter* keeps him from *rising* in the world, the *former* never fails to *sink* him; and that by sure gradations, to the lowest abyss of contempt.

But I fatigue you, my dear Miss Mordaunt, with my too minute details.—To return to my story:—We went the next day to Mr Railton's; Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell had arrived there before us: as you have seen them both, I will not attempt

attempt to describe them to you.—Mr. Railton, with much ceremony, introduced me to Mrs. Blackwell, as a lady of *great genius*. Mr. Blackwell, as soon as the customary forms had passed, and we were seated, paid me half a dozen high-flown compliments on my person, winding them up with comparing me to the famous Corinna, equally remarkable for her *beauty* and her *wit*, who bore away the poetical prize from Pindar.

Much more of this kind passed before we entered into any discourse that afforded me an opportunity of forming a judgment of his understanding and talents. At length however a conversation took place, in which he displayed the symptoms of genius, and a mind improved by the possession of a considerable share of classical knowledge. After we had conversed some time, he expressed again his wishes to see something of my writing. His good understanding and acquired knowledge gave
me

me a favourable opinion of his candour; whilst the praises he bestowed on some observations I had made on a favourite Latin author, perhaps flattered my self-love, and induced me the more readily to accede to his request. He appeared enraptured with my little pieces; he burst forth into repeated eulogiums as he read them; and afterwards expressed, in enthusiastic terms, his love of genius, literature, and the fine arts.

“How I despise,” cried he, “those people blest with affluence, who take no pains to find out and reward genius, or, when it is brought to their knowledge, take every opportunity to treat its possessor with contempt!—nay, there is a set of people who are, in my opinion, ten times worse than these—I mean they who make them the amusement and the conveniency of the moment,—who flatter them for a time, and court their society;—but after they have acquired the
fame

fame of patronizing talents, upon some slight pretence of disgust leave them, without any other advantage than the honour of having once been upon terms of intimacy with such and such great men;" alas! continued he, lifting up his eye-lids, "what a melancholy instance was poor Chatterton of the neglect of genius in this age!"

"I have heard he was a very wild, disorderly young man," said Mr. Railton.

"Oh, dear Sir," said Mr. Blackwell, with an air of great candour, "oh, Sir, I believe they who have vilified him since his death, have done it because they are ashamed to have it known that they treated the follies of youth, and the flights of excentric genius, with as unrelenting a severity as a good mind would have shown to crimes of the blackest dye.—I am clear, Sir, that he was one of the worthiest beings, as well

as

as the greatest geniuses, that ever existed in any age or country—and had I had the supreme happiness of knowing him, I would have allowed for all his little foibles and peculiarities; and whilst I had possessed a shilling he should have had six-pence of it.” Here he paused, wiping off a tear.

“Aye, that I am sure you would, my dear Mr. Blackwell,” said Mrs. Blackwell, “for I have heard you *say* so a hundred times over, in different companies.”

“Indeed, Madam,” returned I, “I honour Mr. Blackwell greatly for the animated zeal with which he speaks of that elegant and hapless bard.”

“Oh, my sweetest Arachne,” said he, “you are too good to me, to praise me so much to Miss Hampden;” upon which she stretched out her hand, and he came across the room and moulded it in his.

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“Oh, my sweetest Arachne,” said he, “you are too good to me, to praise me so much to Miss Hampden;” upon which she stretched out her hand, and he came across the room and moulded it in his.

"No, I am not too good to you," said she: "there are many other things I could tell; but I shan't, because I know they'd make you blush, you have such a poor opinion of your own *merit*, and such a great one of *mine*.—I am sure some people would be quite spoilt if they were to be adored as you adore me."

"Oh, my sweetest Arachne, not at all; I'm sure I do no more than my *duty*;—you have such uncommon excellencies and beauties in your character that,—Oh, my sweetest Arachne, you are—(*here as he spoke he looked into the street, as I imagined, to find something to relieve himself from this dialogue, and in a minute exclaimed*) "Look, my sweetest Arachne, there are the dancing dogs, that diverted you so much the other day."

She now ran to look into the street, as did the rest of the company. For

my own part, I wished to prolong our excursion to the window as much as possible, preferring the sight of dancing-dogs and monkeys to that of the human species exhibiting themselves in far more ludicrous attitudes.

When we were re-seated, Mr. Blackwell and Mr. Railton were both urgent in persuading me to publish what I had written; and the former offered, if I would do him and Mrs. Blackwell the favour of visiting them, they would introduce me to several of the most distinguished literary characters of the age. Even Mrs. Blackwell, with some degree of earnestness, pressed me to visit them, desiring me to fix an early day for that purpose; which I did the more readily, because Mr. Blackwell told me he would invite Dr. Edgeware, for whose great knowledge, talents, and character, I had the highest veneration. The rest of the conversa-

tion that passed I will not trouble you with: — About nine o'clock in the evening we departed.

C H A P. III.

I WENT to Mr. Blackwell's on the day appointed, where I met several very entertaining characters; Dr. Edgeware was not of the party; he had, it seems, been taken suddenly ill, or we should have had the pleasure of his company. Little conversation passed at this interview but what was foreign to myself and the characters I wish to exemplify. Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell however were oppressingly civil to me, and both expressed the liveliest pleasure in my company, in-
treating

treating me, when I took my leave of them, to devote to them as much of my time as I could spare.

In spite of the ungracious idea Mrs. Blackwell's countenance had at first given me of her mind—the eagerness with which she courted the acquaintance of one who could from situation reflect no honour upon her, nor make any return to her services but gratitude, induced me to think she might have a heart capable of friendship;—and perhaps at the time she really felt something arise in her breast which she mistook for the emotions of friendship; but which in verity was nothing more than that satisfaction trifling minds feel from a gratification of the love of novelty;—a new acquaintance (or, as they are pleased to term it, a new friend) bestowing the same kind of pleasure as a new gown or a new cap; and the one as speedily goes out of
C 2 fashion

fashion with this class of women as the other.—The gown or cap however may be thrown aside without the assignment of any cause; but for discarding the friend there must be some plausible excuse given, or the imputation of a ridiculous caprice may chance to fall upon them. The only thing then to be done in that case is, to throw as large a portion of obloquy as possible upon the person who is to be thus discarded.—And from this propensity in the human mind arose, I presume, the Spanish proverb:—If you would hang a dog, you must first give him an ill name.—But to return; though, through Mrs. Blackwell's having the misfortune to be naturally dull, her society was not the most pleasant (her manners being equally as unpolished as her mind); yet a friend, whether charming or not, is a soothing acquisition to the unfortunate. As to
Mr.

Mr. Blackwell, his company was entertaining and agreeable, when he thought proper to repress that acrimony of spirit with which he too frequently viewed and commented upon the faults and the failings of many of his friends (when absent) to whom he paid the most obsequious adulation.—But I have before described him to you.

It is certain the hyperbolical manner in which he made my eulogium, and expressed himself my well-wisher, led me sometimes a little to doubt the sincerity of some of his professions; but these doubts I took pains to check as often as they obtruded, by reflecting on the assiduity with which he introduced me to his friends, and endeavoured to be of service to me. It is to him I owe my acquaintance with my great and amiable friend Lady Melmoth, who no sooner was informed of my situation, than she expressed a wish

to serve me, and that in terms so soothing, so elegant, and so unaffectedly benevolent, that I made no scruple of unfolding to her a little history of myself and my affairs.

I concealed from her indeed no part of my life, but that which related to Lord Henry. As I understood Lady Melmoth was acquainted with some part of the C—— family, I thought there would be an indelicacy in mentioning his lordship's attachment to me, when I had determined never to converse with him again. I therefore imputed my separation from Mrs. G—, to her marriage (which had been celebrated since my arrival in town) with Colonel Herbert, and which was in reality the true cause.

Lady Melmoth said, with a smile, she knew the colonel, and did not think it unnatural that a lady of the age I had described Mrs. G—, should
be

be anxious to remove from her house an attractive young woman, when she had determined to wed a man of Col. Herbert's youth and character. Her ladyship added, that she thought it would be proper I should endeavour to put myself under the protection of some woman of fashion, who might with a domestic friend and companion; and offered to introduce me to some ladies of her acquaintance, whom she thought would be likely to serve me. I accepted this offer with the utmost gratitude, telling her I should prefer the situation she mentioned, to a dependance upon writing for the stage, which had been strenuously suggested to me by Mr. Blackwell and his friend Railton, as I distrusted my own talents for dramatic composition; and could never bring myself to make use of the paltry resources Mr. Railton had in his first interview pointed out to me.

In the early part of my intimacy with the Blackwells, they kept up the farce of excessive fondness for each other very capitally, and surfeited me with the indelicacy of their behaviour; but at last the temper of Mrs. Blackwell could no longer conceal itself; and, notwithstanding the utmost anxiety on the part of her husband to prevent it, she gave me several specimens of the sort of lectures she entertained him with when they were alone. On her recovery from her fits of ill-humour, she used to make the most ridiculous excuses to me, for her behaviour, you can conceive:—sometimes telling me a servant had put her out of humour; at others, that she had been at market, and bought provisions very dear, &c. adding, “These things put me beside myself, and make me fall upon my poor dear Mr. Blacky in that manner; and I am sure he is the sweetest man alive.”

And

And then, projecting her face, she would desire him to come from his book or writing, and salute her. On his part, I believe, having understanding, he felt these unavoidable expositions more strongly than she did. He was perpetually inventing the most ingenious apologies in the world for their quarrels. I remember he once told me,—“his dearest Arachne had so much sensibility, that tho’ she was naturally of the sweetest temper in the world, it made her sometimes appear to be quite a malicious creature, particularly with respect to *him*, whom she doated upon!”

In short, I saw so plainly, in spite of these manœuvres, that he led a miserable life, that I pitied him extremely, and should have done so yet more, had he not been ever the first to unveil the domestic dissensions of other people, making no allowances for a disparity of

tempers, but delivering severe commentaries upon all the married people of his acquaintance who disagreed, pronouncing decisively, that they must be *very bad sort of persons*. Himself and his sweetest Arachne he always represented as the nicest models of conjugal perfection and happiness.—There is no desire, I believe, more prevalent than that of being *thought happy*. What numbers daily sacrifice the most ingenuous and the best feelings of their hearts, at that pride-raised shrine !

Some months had now passed, during the latter part of which time I begun to perceive a material alteration in the behaviour of Mrs. Blackwell ; indeed she took but little pains to conceal the change from me. She seized every opportunity of striving to lessen me in the opinion of her husband ; and was always out of humour when he introduced me to his visitors, with encomiums that brought

upon me any particular notice ; and whatever she heard me commended for, she strove, by a thousand little indescribable insinuations, delivered in a sort of half-jesting half-earnest manner, to lower the merit of. There are some dispositions so malicious, as even to envy the pity which the misfortunes of their associates inspire. She hated to see me with any body who had conceived a degree of friendship or regard for me ; and at last, she made parties of those of her visitors whom she thought I liked best, and purposely left me out ; taking care, the next time she saw me, to tell me of them. As neither her person nor her wit ever subjected her to the shadow of a compliment, she detested every one who had the least attractions. She took frequent opportunities of reminding me, that (to use her own words) “ I must not take all for gospel that was said to me, for that

people very often said a great deal more than they thought; and often paid compliments only to amuse themselves, particularly men who knew the world."

These remarks from a woman whom I could not but feel my inferior, both in understanding and observation, roused my resentment; and, I own, I did not refrain from reminding her, with some degree of tartness,—“That I did not consider myself as an absolute novice to the world; and, as I had been bred from my infancy on a footing of intimacy with persons who moved in an elegant sphere of life, I thought myself as capable of judging of the degree of attention I ought to pay to commonplace expressions of politeness, as herself.”

She flew into a great passion of tears, and a violent hysteric fit followed it, or *seemed* to follow it. She pretended to be

be extremely hurt, "that I could possibly take, what she only meant as the kindest thing in the world, in an affronting light."

Her tears and pretended agitation affected me; and I strove to flatter myself, that what I had imputed to ill-nature, had arisen merely from a coarseness of manners, and a wish of appearing to possess a superior degree of penetration. She begged me to believe that she had offended me through inattention, and not design; above all, entreating that I would not let any body know, particularly Lady Melmoth, that any dispute had occurred between us.—I assured her I would not, and for some time we both wore the olive.

"I am glad to find," said Maria, "she had so much generosity in her nature as to make those concessions; and her desire to conceal your little quarrel from
from

from Lady Melmoth, looked as if she did not mean to affront you again."

"So *I* then thought," returned Miss Hampden; "but I was greatly mistaken: her design in wishing not to break with me at that juncture, was only owing to her having planned an injury for me, which was not then ripe for execution: As you will discover as I proceed.

C H A P. IV.

AFTER this reconciliation, Mrs. Blackwell affected to treat me with augmented fondness ; but I speedily saw a growing coldness in the behaviour of her husband towards me, that showed itself in an omission of certain polite and respectful attentions, which he had till then been ever ceremoniously sedulous to perform.

This disgustful alteration, with the little friendship I felt for his wife, induced me to be less frequent in my visits to them ; insomuch that their friend *Railton* took notice of it ; and, as he called upon my father very often, said to me one morning, when he happened to find me alone,—

“ Pray,

“Pray, what is the reason, Miss Hampden, I do not see you with the Blackwells so often as usual?”

I did not scruple to mention what had offended me in their behaviour.

“Poh! poh! my dear Madam,” returned he; “you must not mind these sort of things;—people who live in the world see them and pass them by. Perhaps she thinks that, by making you her companion, she has thrown herself into the shade; and that has put her out of humour with you.—Oh, if you are so soon appalled at the envy of your own sex, you’ll never get through the world with any *eclat*.”

“But what inspired you with these suspicions?” said I;—“Did they say any thing respecting me to you?”

“Oh, no; she never addressed herself particularly to me; but I have heard her say, in a manner betwixt a jest and a sneer, that you were a great
wit,

wit, and a great *genius*; and that you made her appear a mere cypher, &c. There are certain pretended half-jesting sentences, which, like *half aside* speeches in a play, you know, convey a full meaning to the auditors."

"But can motives like those influence Mr. Blackwell's conduct? Can that occasion his indifference? I might add, his flights and rudenesses."

"Oh, very possibly;—there is not a prouder being in the world than Blackwell; and if his wife has piqued his self-love, by persuading him that your brilliance has lessened her consequence, he'll hate you as cordially as she does. For pride, which is the prime hinge on which all his actions turn, induces him to consider a neglect of her as a neglect of himself, and to think that his merits ought to throw a ray of importance over her absurdity and insignificance. There is yet another motive which may
actuate

actuate him :—You have had an opportunity of seeing their domestic conduct, which I fancy is not perfectly consistent with the pretensions to extraordinary *amity* they make in public.”

“ I believe,” said I, “ there is nothing more likely to make a man one’s enemy, than to have had an opportunity (though ever so undesignedly) of *seeing* those parts of his temper and conduct he is most anxious to conceal.”

“ Well, well—but we must not refine too much,” said he ; “ they may have it in their power to serve you in some way or other ; therefore I think I would not advise you to give up the acquaintance. If we live in this world, we must *become all things to all men*.—But *apropos*—do you mean to go to the new play which is to be performed to-night ? ”

“ Oh no ! ” returned I ; — “ I have been at the first representation of
two

two or three new pieces this winter ; but I have resolved never to go to another."

" Why so ? why so ? my dear Madam."

" Because it hurts my feelings in a manner I cannot describe.—I sat amidst several who called themselves the friends of the author, and who, during the whole time of the performance, descanted with great ease and fluency on his extreme poverty and distress ; and the terrible disgraces and disasters in which he and his family would be involved, should the piece fail to succeed. They were heard with an air of supercilious contempt by many ; whilst the epithets, *Poor man ! Poor wretch !* and *Poor devil !* were uttered by others with an unfeeling vacuity of aspect, that shocked and provoked me to an extreme degree."

" In what part of the house were you ? "

" The

"The green boxes; Mrs. Blackwell and I went in our hats."

"Then take the trouble of dressing to-night, and go into a front or side box, and you'll be sure to hear nothing of the author; 'tis a million to one if you meet with any persons there who know him; but if you should, you may depend they'll take care not to mention so unfashionable and so *outré* an acquaintance as an author.—But *apropos*, of plays!—Pray have you done as I advised you? Have you attempted to write a dramatic piece?"

"If I had *not*, do you suppose your present discourse likely to stimulate me?"

"Oh, you must not be discouraged by what I have said; you know it is the audience *at large* who determine the merits of a play."

I had amused myself, for some days before, in trying my skill in the dramatic

matic way; and, as he urged me very much to let him peruse what I had written, I showed him two or three scenes of a comedy I had sketched. He flew into raptures—protested I had more talents for writing in that line, than any poet of the present day. In short, my dear Miss Mordaunt, I should fatigue you to death, were I to relate half the extravagant compliments he lavished upon me. Nor did he leave me till he had (with the air of one whose vanity took from him all ideas of rejection) declared himself my lover, and offered me his hand, heart, and fortune.

Mr. Railton had often professed a most profound admiration of my talents, and frequently addressed me in the language of love; but had never till now, by making any direct proposals, given me an opportunity of putting a stop to his suit by a refusal.

As he concluded, however, I could
hardly

hardly forbear smiling in his face; a most ludicrous idea had started into my head, namely—that his motive for avowing his desire to unite his fate with mine, arose from his having made an imaginary discovery, that I possessed, or was likely to possess, an estate on the Parnassian mountain. But the evident appearance there was in his countenance, that he thought I could not but rejoice at his overture, wounded both my pride and my delicacy.

I answered, very coldly,—“ I thank you for your expressions of esteem and admiration, Mr. Railton; but I feel no inclination at present to change my situation; and, therefore, should be obliged to you to importune me no further on this head, as no solicitations will at all alter my sentiments.”

He then said, “ he supposed I was particularly engaged elsewhere;” with a look

a look that expressed it *must be so*, if I could refuse him.

“ I do not think myself obliged, Sir, to make any explanation upon this subject,” said I, somewhat haughtily; and my father coming into the room at that instant, prevented any more conversation of this kind. I was rejoiced at the interruption; and, having thus spoken my sentiments freely, ideas of a far different nature took possession of my mind. But, though Railton conversed with my father on indifferent topics, I could plainly perceive his mind still brooded over our previous discourse; and the pique and resentment he had conceived against me, was strongly marked in his aspect—where a deep and sullen gloom had superseded mantling smiles and self-sufficient vivacity.

The thought of having humbled his arrogance gave me pleasure at the time; but I soon experienced how dangerous
it

it is to offend the pride or vanity of a mean mind. Prudence should have taught me to have silenced him, by showing dignity, without suffering disgust to appear. But I was incapable, at the moment, of making reflections; I was hurt at his pretensions; and my recent disappointments had perhaps given a degree of asperity to my temper, which was not habitual to it.—Above all, I had been beloved by the generous, the noble, the all-elegant Lord Henry C——! and I felt as if an indignity had been offered to him, that a being so insignificant as Railton should hope to obtain that heart, that hand, he had thought worth suing for with all the tender and ardent supplication of impassioned humility.

C H A P. V.

IT was late in the evening, I think, of the 9th or 10th day after this incident, that I received the following note from my father, who had not been at home since dinner :—

“ Dear Emmy,

“ I shall not come home to-night ;—
I am now in confinement at —, for a debt which I have owed a long time, but which I never expected to have been troubled for, (and dare say never should, as my creditor knew I had it not in my power to pay him) had not some malicious person told him, that you have some little property, which they suppose you would rather part with,
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than see me in a prison. It will be useless for you to come to-night, if you should be disposed to do so;—but in the morning, as early as possible, I shall be glad to see you. I rather suspect Railton to be the person who gave the hint; for no one else of my acquaintance knows any thing about you. I could not have thought he had been so mean a wretch—but don't be more uneasy than you can help, child:—Keep up your spirits.—I am,

Your affectionate father,

CHARLES HAMPDEN.”

The contents of this letter almost petrified me with surprize. The little property he alluded to was a small diamond ring, and a pair of bracelets, with the pictures of my first friends, set with jewels, which had been presented to me by Mrs. G—; and a watch given me by my honoured friend, her departed husband. The meanness of Railton

did not, I own, much astonish me, as my ideas of his generosity were by no means exalted; but I now felt the injury I had done myself, by giving way to the warmth of my temper, and shewing the contempt in which I held him. Yet, notwithstanding I saw I should inevitably suffer for it, my spirit would not permit me to *regret* the disdain I had displayed.

I did not hesitate a moment in determining to sacrifice my little ornaments to relieve a parent's necessities, if I could not compleat his enlargement without; but, I own, I wished to devise a plan of placing them in the hands of some person, from whence I might, if I should have it in my power, redeem them. But this could not be done by any but a friend; for the value of the diamonds did not amount to more than the sum required; therefore, what I could have obtained by deposit-

ing them with a pawn-broker, would not answer the purpose.

I knew no one in London, except the Blackwells, with whom I lived on a footing of intimacy sufficient to authorize my asking such an instance of friendship; and their late behaviour did not much encourage me to make a proposition of that kind to them.

Whilst ruminating in this manner, I took the diamonds out of a small casket: the pictures of the tender friends of my childhood and youth, produced on an occasion so affecting, roused a thousand recollections so painful, that I burst into a passion of tears as I stood looking upon them; and the desire increased, some way or other to prevent my losing for ever those proofs of the tenderness and affection once felt for me by those who bestowed them.

As the wish of retaining them strengthened, I insensibly felt my disinclination
of

of applying to the Blackwells decrease. I wished to find them all they had at first professed themselves; and I permitted my imagination to give way to the delusion of self-flattery. I endeavoured to persuade myself I had misconstrued some part of their behaviour, and strove to place all that had appeared unpleasant in the most favourable light; and as to what Railton had said, the contempt I felt for him made me blame myself for having listened to his suggestions. In short, my imagination began to impose upon my judgment, and had almost brought me to believe that I had injured them.

The next morning, as soon as it was time to appear abroad, I put the jewels into my pocket, took a coach, and drove to their house, determined to give them an opportunity of effectually evincing their sincerity. After the salutation of the morning, Mrs. Blackwell exclaimed,

ed, "Dear me, Miss Hampden, I wonder how you can like riding in a hackney coach this hot weather." This I perceived was a hint that she thought me extravagant:—her manner hurt me, but I was resolved to think the best, and imputed it to the narrowness of her education, which might have imbued contracted ideas in a mind naturally liberal.

In a few minutes Mr. Blackwell came into the room, and we entered into conversation; when I had disclosed the unfortunate incident which had occurred to my father, Mr. Blackwell, having regarded his wife's countenance with a scrutinizing eye, drew his chair three steps from me, with a look of coldness; whilst, on the contrary, the features of his wife assumed an air of more than common satisfaction. The fact was, Blackwell being a man of sense, and desiring to pass in the world for a

man

man of extreme politeness, had acquired a certain perception of delicacy, that made him wish to find some tolerably plausible excuse for refusing what he imagined I was about to ask ; but the lady, embarrassed by no feelings of this nature, was eager for the moment of request, that she might mortify by denial, and irritate by impertinence.

Before I had mentioned the favour I had purposed to ask of them, Mr. Blackwell, having somewhat recovered from his embarrassment, exclaimed, with great gravity and elevation of aspect,—“ If you had taken the advice of myself and Mr. Railton, and had written a play, Miss Hampden, and it had succeeded, you would have been able to have paid your father’s debts, without being obliged to apply to your friends.”

“ Yes,” cried Mrs. Blackwell, “ you know that was what *I* always advised.”

“Yes, my charmingest Arachne, so you did;—but you are ever giving me some new opportunity of complimenting my judgment in the choice of a woman of your exquisite foresight, and amiable disposition.”

“I do not think myself culpable,” said I, “in not attempting a species of composition, for which I thought my talents unadapted; especially as Lady Melmoth had kindly offered her assistance in obtaining me a situation, as private governess to a young lady, or something of that nature. Besides, had I even, as you and Mr. Railton suggested, written a play, it is not very probable, that a writer unknown, and unhackneyed in theatrical *manœuvres*, should have much chance of procuring its representation.”

“Oh dear!” said Mrs. Blackwell, with a sneer, “our friend Mr. Railton thought it would be no difficult matter.

But

But it is no business of ours ; I'm sure, my dear Mr. Blackwell and I only mentioned it for your good ; we don't covet the trouble of interesting ourselves in other people's affairs ;—when we do, it is entirely out of friendship !

From these sort of speeches I discovered, that all I had to say in my own defence would be treated with disregard, as they seemed possessed with the idea that I was come to borrow money, and were resolved to pretend to see my conduct in a false point of view, in order to gain an excuse for affronting me.

Highly mortified at this supposition, I determined to let them know I did not wish them to run any hazard in serving me ; and therefore produced the jewels, and told the favour I called to request.

Mrs. Blackwell no sooner heard that I was going to part with those ornaments, than a gleam of added satisfac-

tion illumined her features. Not so her husband's;—for, putting on a solemn look of compassion, he said,—“ I am very sorry it is not in our power to comply with this request ; but we have lately put all our money into the funds, and it would be extremely inconvenient at this time to serve you in that way.”—He was going on with excuses of this nature, but was stopped by his wife—

“ It does not signify making apologies, love,” said she ; “ we may as well tell Miss Hampden the truth at once, as we are her friends. I own, I think it would be of little service to lend her money upon her jewels, as in all probability it may be a considerable time before she will be able to redeem them ; and I dare say she will not find any one else more ready to lend the full value upon them ; therefore I think it would be best to sell them outright. And I am sure, for my *own* part, I should not
feel

feel any reluctance at all in parting with a few baubles, if *my father*, or *you*, my dear Mr. Blackwell, were in distress."

"No, that I am sure you would not, my sweetest Arachne; but you are an exalted creature, and despise the idle vanities of your sex."

I replied, with a good deal of spirit, that I had no desire to preserve these trifles at the expence of a parent's sufferings; but I thought there was nothing unnatural or blameable in the wish so to secure these little presents (from those who had been the tender guardians of my early youth) that I might regain them if fortune should again smile upon me.

"Now I think of it," cried Mrs. Blackwell, "I wonder you don't apply to your friend in the country; I suppose if you parted upon good terms,

she would be likely to serve you in this exigence."

"Very true, my Arachne," said Mr. Blackwell.

Mrs. Blackwell's speech was pointed with so peculiar an emphasis, that I knew it was meant to draw something from me; but as I had told her nothing respecting Lord Henry before, I disdained at that moment to enter into a detail; and therefore I only answered, "I have some reasons for not wishing to apply to Mrs. G—," and left her to make what comments she pleased on the matter.

"Oh, I recollect," cried she, "that you once told me something about her marriage with Colonel Herbert; but I should think that could make no difference with regard to your borrowing a little money of her."

Here she paused ; and before I could reply, she exclaimed :

“ Oh dear, Mr. Blackwell, do you know that I saw our neighbour, Miss Harford, go out in a coach the other day, with that elegant young man that’s always dangling after her ;— They say he is a young gentleman of great family and great expectations ; I think it is vastly imprudent (to say no worse) for a girl like her, who has no fortune, to be seen with him so often.—I have no doubt it is without the knowledge of his friends ; but one comfort is, no good ever comes of those sort of connections.—I would not be severe, but I think things look very black.—And I am of opinion I ought to *drop* her acquaintance. Eh, love ? don’t you think so ? ”

“ You are perfectly right, my sweetest Arachne,” returned Blackwell ; “ one should

should never countenance things of that nature; by associating with bad people one unavoidably gives a sanction to wrong. I own I think with you, that she must be an artful woman, who wants to draw in the young man to marry her, or perhaps worse; and I would not wish your angelic purity to mix with such dross."

"Oh dear, yes," cried she, "such women are the vilest creatures in the world. That's what makes me not like to keep company with her, for I dare say she does not scruple to behave in a very indelicate way, to induce him to run after her so.—People of that artful nature don't stick at any thing, you know, to accomplish their designs. Yes, I think it will be quite proper that I should *drop* Miss Harford—yes, I am determined upon it. I am sure I hope our poor dear little daughter, when she returns from boarding-school,

ing-school, will have nothing of that turn of conduct; for if she should, it would be the death of me."

"Oh, certainly it would, my dearest Arachne: but we have nothing to fear on that point; she is in her disposition too like her amiable mother to have any of those sort of foibles;—besides, she has not that sort of physiognomy; she has too much of the fine, mild, meek, delicate profile of my Arachne.—Oh, she can never err, my Arachne, after the education you have given her."

This dialogue was uttered with many very pointed looks; and I could plainly perceive she had been at no small pains to *transpose* the story of *Miss Harford*, in order, as she thought, to adapt it more particularly to my case. And it occurred to me, that the same despicable wretch, who was capable

pable of the meanness I have mentioned, with respect to the arrest, had likewise been base enough to attempt to stab my character by relating facts mysteriously, and propagating blackening surmises. You will now call to mind, my dear Miss Mordaunt, the circumstance of Railton's finding Lord Henry alone with me at my father's, and perceive the malicious handle he had made of that incident, by giving so invaluable an opportunity to an envious woman of traducing my character.

I was now in a situation of all others the most cruel, that of being talked *to* in an *allegory*; I fired inwardly at the calumny, and yet knew not how, and indeed disdained to begin to exculpate myself: from this painful state I could no way relieve myself but by departing; and I accordingly

cordingly rose to do so. Upon which Mr. Blackwell muttered out something about being sorry it was not in his power to accommodate me; and his wife very assiduously, and with a great affectation of kindness, wrote me a direction to a jeweller of her acquaintance, whom she recommended as the properest person in the world to purchase my trinkets.—I put it into my pocket-book, and with an indignant reserve, made my parting compliments, and withdrew in a manner that plainly told them they need not fear a repetition of my visits. Indeed it was high time (to use her own elegant expression) that I should be *dropped*, as I had fully answered the purposes of these *friends of genius*.—I had been exhibited to their acquaintance—they had by that means added to their reputation of a fondness for encouraging talents; and

and had picked out *seeming* faults enough in my conduct to justify their refusing to assist me when I most needed the hand of friendship.

C H A P. VI.

I WENT immediately to the jeweller's—and, not to trouble you with the intermediate particulars, my father was relieved from his confinement that morning. As soon as this business was transacted, I ordered the coachman to drive to Lady Melmoth's; but, to my extreme mortification, I learnt from the servant who opened the door, that her ladyship was gone a little way out of town, and
that

that they knew not exactly when she would return. The state of apprehension I was then in, led me to conclude I had been misrepresented to Lady M——, and that her doors were shut against me; most sensibly did that affect me; I determined immediately to write to her, but I was prevented; my health had been for some time before in a very weak condition, and the fatigue and anxiety I had gone through this day, so greatly overpowered my constitution, that I was seized in the evening with a fever, which continued a fortnight; in another week however I was able to walk about the room, tho' still weak and much emaciated; and my spirits sunk to the lowest ebb of dejection.

To all hope of happiness I had long bade adieu; an ill-starred passion had opened a spring of sorrow in my breast, which I too strongly felt would never
ease

cease to flow. But I now saw myself reduced to a state that inspired the most despairing reflections. Calumny and caprice had torn from me every friend who had the power of serving me, and left me sick, helpless, destitute, and forlorn.

One evening, whilst ideas like these wholly engrossed my mind, I received another letter from my father, informing me that he was again arrested; but, as he knew I had nothing left but my cloaths, he did not expect or wish I should attempt to relieve him by any means but that of borrowing from a friend, which he feared I should not be able to do.

The woman who attended me was from home when I received this letter, which had so violent an effect on my debilitated spirits that I fainted away. How long I continued insensible I know not, but when I awoke from this
transient

transient death, I found myself still alone; and the first use I made of speech was to vent the bitterest agonies of grief; my reason began to forsake me, and my trust in Providence gave way to the most piercing despair. From the indulgence of these emotions I was recalled by the cries of one in extreme pain, and on listening discovered them to proceed from an apartment over my head; as the noise increased, I concluded the person to be in need of assistance, and, losing for the moment my sorrows and my weakness in my sympathetic feelings, I flew up stairs with the celerity of a person in full health. On entering the room I found a woman stretched on a bed in great agony, and alone: having rendered her what assistance it was in my power to give, she after some little time grew better, and related to me the cause of her pain, which proceeded
from

from a wound occasioned by her having had, some years before, a fractured limb very unskilfully set. She had had every aid that surgery could give to remedy the ill, but the wound was deemed incurable, and the only relief she could obtain from the torment it sometimes gave her, was derived from the use of laudanum; saying this, she requested me to give her a small box from the chimney-piece, from which she took a large pill and swallowed it.

The sight of another gloomy shade in the picture of human life did not lessen my melancholy, or cause me to look with less horror on my own situation:—"Alas! unhappy being," thought I, "in thy lot I see my own destiny, sickness and poverty!"—At that moment (I shudder to relate it) the idea of self-destruction presented itself to my mind as my only resource
against

against a life of misery.—Affecting an uninterested tone, I asked her what quantity would ease one's pain for ever; she broke off a very small piece, and replied—"THAT would be sufficient for a person who had not been enured by degrees to taking opiates."

I trembled as she laid it in the palm of my hand, and yet resolved to secure it; having watched her eyes therefore till I saw them bent in a contrary direction, I closed the box and replaced it on the shelf, pretending to have put the broken piece of opium into it, and presently descended to my own apartment, determined to execute my purpose before any one returned; a petrifying chill crept through every vein, yet my resolution forsook me not: I advanced slowly into the middle of my own room; when a sudden dimness shaded my eyes, a dark mist hovered round me, I had no longer the smallest discernment

discernment of objects ; I leant against the back of a chair ; in two minutes a hand appeared to penetrate through the surrounding gloom, as if extended to snatch from me the deathful opiate. At sight of this vision the fatal drug fell from my nerveless hand ; I started back appalled ; the side of my head dashed against the chimney-piece with so violent a concussion, that in endeavouring to reach a chair, my strength failed me, and I fell on the floor. All power of reflection was for some minutes suspended ; but its return brought to my heart an awful penitence for the crime I had been about to commit ; and tears of sincere remorse rolled down my cheeks, whilst I offered up my grateful and ardent acknowledgments for the deliverance I had experienced, and prayed to be endowed with a spirit of resignation to the will of infinite wisdom !

C H A P.

C H A P. VII.

WHILST I was thus engaged, I heard a carriage stop at the door, and presently feet ascending the stair-case: as I expected no one, I concluded it was somebody going to the other lodger. Judge my surprize when the door opened and Lady Melmoth entered!—She stood a moment petrified with amazement;—shocking indeed must have been the spectacle I then presented!—I was still on the floor, the back of my head supported against the arm of a chair; I had on a long white morning dress negligently pinned, my cap had fallen off, and my hair unpowdered hung loosely over my pale haggard countenance, rendered to appearance yet more ghastly by the

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blood

blood which had flowed from the wound on my temple.

I thought, at the first entrance of Lady Melmoth, I beheld a second vision ; but it inspired nothing of fear. I rose from the ground, and would have advanced to try the reality of what I saw ; but she moved quickly towards me, her features relaxing into an expression of benignity, though they still retained somewhat of their former impression of terror. She led me to a seat ; and then placing herself beside me, cried, with the voice of heart-soothing tenderness,—
“ Tell me, my dear Miss Hampden ! tell me, my sweet young friend !—what has caused the appearance of horror and distraction I behold ? ”

I made no reply—my heart was too full for utterance. I seized both her hands ; I pressed them eagerly to my lips, and to my heart—bathing them with the fast-flowing tears, which nature,

ture, to save my heart from bursting in that moment of swelling gratitude, kindly lent me.

At length articulation was given me, and I exclaimed, kneeling at her feet—

“Oh you! my all! my guardian angel! my deliverer from more than death—from *perdition*!—for sure ’twas your hand which snatched from my lips the poisonous drug!”—Here, exhausted by the violence of my emotions, I ceased speaking; and, nearly suffocated with convulsive sighs, dropped my weary head upon her lap. Lady Melmoth gazed on me with the most eager anxiety. She supposed me bereft of sense: the tear of terror and commiseration trembled in her eye. She raised me from the ground, placed me in a chair, and laying my face on her bosom,—“Compose yourself, my sweet girl,” cried she; “and then tell me what has happened, to inspire the extreme afflic-

tion in which I find you ; and if I can remove or alleviate it, tax my power to the utmost."

I lifted up my head ;—I fixed my grateful eyes ardently on her lovely aspect. I opened my lips with the intention of pouring my sorrows into the soft consolatory bosom of friendship.—But she prevented me. Perceiving her handkerchief stained with the blood from my temple, she hastily exclaimed,—"First let me send for some assistance." I replied, it was only a slight wound, that occasioned little pain, and would soon heal of itself ; and begged her not to send for any body : but, disregarding me, she ran to the top of the stairs, and calling her footman, ordered him to fetch the first surgeon he could meet with.

On her ladyship's return, I related, as succinctly as possible, every thing that had occurred to me since the time I first saw

saw Lord Henry. She listened to me with the most profound and friendly attention; an attention like yours, my sweet friend, only interrupted by sighs, tears, and expressions of detestation and abhorrence of the duplicity and meanness I had experienced, under the sacred title of friendship. I concealed not from her the sallies of a too impetuous temper; but related every incident with the same candor I would have confessed it to the great Author of my existence!

There is an ingenuous freedom in the language of truth, which seldom fails to impress the unprejudiced auditor.

I experienced the justness of this remark in the behaviour of Lady Melmoth. She soothed my agitated heart, by praising, with tender warmth, many parts of my conduct; and, whatever had been my errors, she seemed fully convinced, they were not of the nature or magnitude they had been represented

to her. She owned that Mrs. Blackwell had endeavoured to injure me in her good opinion, in a very essential point of conduct; but she observed,—“Malice could never effectually be concealed, but by those who united an acute understanding to a wily spirit; and was sure to destroy its own intentions, in persons of groveking intellects.”

Here we were interrupted by the arrival of a surgeon, who having examined, and applied a slight dressing to my wound, pronounced that in two or three days it would be completely healed—and retired.

As soon as he had left us, I began to express, in the strong terms my gratitude prompted, the sense I had of her ladyship's generosity, in visiting me to know the truth or falsehood of what she had heard; but she would not suffer me to proceed—

“You owe me nothing,” said her ladyship;

ladyship; "I have barely done you justice. Such is the frail state of humanity, that self-interest or personal pique too frequently warps spirits of great native liberality, and leads them to judge with too much severity of the conduct of others. But where no such motive actuates, the mind must be corrupt indeed; that can take a tale of scandal upon trust, which the general conduct, sentiments, and manners of the object aspersed, contradict. And such a mind must mine have been, had I acted differently towards Miss Hampden.—And now, my young friend, permit me to give you a small proof of the friendship I profess—let me be so happy as to make your mind easy on your father's account." Thus sweetly interrogated, I told her ladyship the amount of the debt for which he was confined. She thanked me for the information; and with a look, which you who know her

aspect may imagine, replied—"You shall hear from me when I get home."

I could make no verbal answer to expressions so soothing, and sentiments so generous; I snatched her hand, and raised it to my lips and my heart, with looks and sensations that it is not in language to describe.

C H A P. VIII.

LADY Melmoth had perceived from my narrative, that the idea of suffering in her estimation, had been to me a source of the most poignant uneasiness; and she was fearful the confirmation she had given me, that efforts had not been wanting to effect that purpose, should, by irritating my feelings, retard my recovery. On this account, she said every thing to calm my mind, that the mildest spirit of benevolence, and the noblest principles of religion could inspire. But her admonitions were unnecessary at that crisis; my heart was too much softened by the benefit the Blackwells had (though undesignedly) done me, in occasioning

Lady Melmoth's visit, to retain any violent emotions of resentment against them.

She seemed pleased when I gave her this information; and rising to take her leave,—“Adieu, my love, adieu,” cried she.

“I am happy to leave you in a frame of mind so comfortable, as well as proper;—I will see you again very soon; in the mean time, don't neglect to take care of your health; I hope to have the happiness of finding it much restored when I visit you again.” Here, with a look of smiling benignity, she withdrew;—and in about an hour after she had left me, I received from her a very polite and affectionate note, containing a bill of double the value of the sum I had mentioned; and the pleasing intelligence, that she meant to visit me on the morning of the next day.

At the appointed time she came.

Her

Her ladyship told me, that a relation, who had lived with her as her domestic friend and companion since the death of Sir Robert Melmoth, had lately married; and that it was this friend she was visiting when I called at her house some weeks before.

Lady Melmoth then made me an offer of residing with her, upon the most delicate, friendly, and liberal terms; which I need not tell you I accepted with grateful avidity.

The third day of my residence with her ladyship, when I retired to dress for a visit I was to make with her that evening, I found in one of my dressing boxes, the diamond ring, bracelets, &c. I had disposed of to the jeweller, who was the same person her ladyship always used.

I could not return her my thanks for this delicate instance of generous attention, without tears.

“Do not, my dear Miss Hampden,” said she, “think so highly of a little service rendered to you without difficulty to myself. These little ornaments were formerly valuable to you, as being the endeared gifts of friendly affection; you will now view them, I am sure, with added pleasure, as having been the means of aiding a parent’s necessities.”

But here her benevolence did not end;—through the interest of some part of her ladyship’s family, with men in power, my father obtained an employment under government, sufficiently lucrative to procure him the conveniences and comforts of life to which he had been accustomed.

My mind set at rest on this subject, the life I lead with this admirable woman is, of all others, that I could most wish—calm, tranquil—yet agreeably diversified by intelligent society and

and rational amusement. And, were it not for some painful recollections, I should perhaps enjoy as large a portion of happiness as this state of being admits of.—But, alas ! what can a calm produce to those whose hopes are shipwrecked !

Here Miss Hampden ended her narrative ; and it being near their usual hour of breakfasting, the ladies rose, and dressed to join the family.

C H A P. IX.

DURING the nightly excursion we have recorded, Maria had chanced to drop, unknowingly, the letter she had written to Dr. Edgeware. This letter Lord Newry, as he passed through the gallery the next morning, picked up, and (it being unsealed) immediately gratified his curiosity by perusing it. From some expressions contained in it, his lordship learnt, what he knew not before, that the situation of our fair heroine was wholly a dependent one; and this knowledge revived hopes, which, whilst he imagined her a woman of fortune, her manner of receiving his assiduities had damped. As Lord
Newry

Newry had always *pretended* the most honourable attachment, he *now* believed her reserve to be merely assumed, and resolved to renew his suit with redoubled ardour ; thinking the hope of possessing a coronet, (united with attractions like his) was enough to turn the head and enchant the heart of the wisest woman in the world, in her circumstances.

Maria did not discover her loss till just before she descended the next morning ; and happening to enter the breakfast-room unaccompanied, she found Lord Newry alone, indulging the ideas I have been describing. She eagerly inquired if, in returning to his own apartment, he had found a letter she had dropped the night before, directed to Dr. Edgeware.

“ No, upon my soul, Madam,” replied his lordship—not choosing she should know he had found the letter,
left

lest she should suspect his knowledge of her affairs, and guard against his designs—"No, upon my soul, Madam, I saw nothing of it; perhaps Mr. Aubrey might.—I hope our strange adventure did not prevent your sleeping the remainder of the night.—That rascal deserved to have been kicked down stairs; if he had been my servant, I should have made him instantly strip, and walk out of doors; or, perhaps, have stabbed him on the spot for the impertinence of his ridiculous frolic. But, I hope you got a little sleep—indeed I could almost venture to swear you did, by the brightness of your eyes, and the radiancy of your complexion."

"Indeed your lordship is mistaken," said Maria; "for when I got to my own chamber, I spent some time in relating our adventure to Miss Hampden; and when I had ended, the morning

ing was so far advanced, that neither of us felt any inclination to sleep; and we conversed on different topics till we rose."

"I confess," returned Lord Newry, "I could take no rest myself; but from a cause very different from yours;—it was not the fatigue of talking that deprived me of repose."

"True, my Lord," answered Maria, in a raillying tone; "*terror* is a very quiet sensation, and I conjecture you had not entirely overcome yours."

"Ah no, my lovely girl!" said he; "it was not *fear*, but *certainty*, that robbed me of sleep;—'twas the touch of that beauteous cheek which fired my soul, and kept me waking!"

"You take very unbecoming liberties, my Lord, both in your conversation and behaviour," said Maria,—blushing at the boldness of his looks, and walking to the window:

"Forgive

“Forgive me, my charming creature! I protest to heaven I would not designedly displease you for the world’s wealth; you are the only woman I ever loved!—Do not kill me with your frowns!—Have some pity on the miserable wretch your charms have made!”

“You know, my Lord, I have no inclination to listen to language of this kind;—pray do not attempt to detain me,” said she, going to leave the room.

“Stay, stay, my enchanting Miss Mordaunt! I intreat you to hear me! let me strive to melt your heart to compassion.”

“I told your Lordship in a former conversation, that I should esteem myself indebted to your generosity if you would desist from importunities, which as I can make no return to your passion, are extremely irksome to me. And
sure

sure I am, my Lord, if you were really under the influence of an honourable attachment, you would suffer in silence rather than act contrary to my desire."

As she uttered these words, she strove to get from him, in order to leave the room; but, still on his knees, he held her hands in his, imprinting them with his lips; and at the instant Aubrey opened the door. Maria, with a look of wildness, snatched her hand from Lord Newry, her neck and face covered with blushes of embarrassment and vexation. Aubrey, not much less disconcerted, darted a piercing look of surprise mixed with reproach at Maria, and pronouncing in an hesitating tone, "I beg your pardon," retired. Maria stood a moment motionless with confusion; but she had read plainly in the aspect of Aubrey that he thought she encouraged the addresses of Lord Newry; and, earnestly wishing to undeceive him,

him, involuntarily exclaimed (breaking from his lordship who still aimed to detain her, and running to the door) "Stay, stay, Mr. Aubrey;" but he heard her not, and passed into the garden.—Provoked to an extreme degree, she now turned her head towards Lord Newry, uttering, with the emphasis of wounded sensibility, "How I detest you, my Lord!" and quitted the room; into which she did not return till she was told Lady Melmoth and Miss Hampden were there.

When she re-entered, Lord Newry was giving her Ladyship, in his usual style, a very mirthful account of the transaction of the preceding night.

"Oh, I am glad you are come, my dear Miss Mordaunt," cried her Ladyship, "my Lord's stories are generally so profusely adorned, that we are scarcely ever able to distinguish reality from ornament; be so kind, therefore,
fair

fair heroine of the adventure, as to inform us whether your night excursion was really as Quixotic as his Lordship has described it."

Maria, placing herself in a window, near which Lady Melmoth sat, began to enter into a faithful relation of the whole transaction; and, whilst she was so doing, Lord Newry, notwithstanding a very severe look she darted at him, squeezed himself into the window-seat beside her.

His Lordship underwent a good deal of raillery from Lady Melmoth and Miss Hampden; for Maria did not neglect to put his terror in as ludicrous a light as possible. He affected to feel great confusion at being placed in so laughable a point of view; and as she pursued her narrative, under pretence of intreating her to spare him, he again detained one of her hands, notwithstanding all her opposition.

tion. Whilst he was thus amusing himself, to the extreme mortification of Maria, Aubrey came in; the first object that met his sight was Lord Newry seated close beside Maria, holding her hand familiarly in his. He turned his eyes towards her, but quickly withdrawing them, made a passing bow to the company, and moved to a seat on the opposite side the room. Hurt and confused, it was some minutes before our heroine ventured to mark his countenance, and when she did, it was with a trembling eye and aching heart. But jealousy had seized on the spirit of Aubrey, and he returned a reproachful glance, in which Maria discovered, or thought she discovered, a mortifying mixture of contempt.

“Alas!” thought she, “I lamented that he had too plainly seen the softness of my soul;—but he now thinks

thinks me light, trifling, and change-ful!"

Wrung to the heart by this reflection, she determined to seize the first opportunity of undeceiving him respecting the detested Lord Newry. Engrossed by this resolution, and revolving in her mind different ways of introducing the subject when an opportunity should present itself, she uttered little during breakfast; after which, Lady Melmoth taking up a book, asked her friends if she should read to them Mr. Hayley's tragedy of *Marcella*; Maria and Miss Hampden thanked her for the proposition.

"I shall be particularly obliged to your Ladyship," said Aubrey, "for it was this play which kept me from my pillow last night. I had just ended the second act, when Miss Mordaunt's exclamation of terror reached my ears; and I am impatient to learn the catastrophe

strophe of a piece which had so powerfully seized on my feelings."

"I do not wonder," returned Miss Hampden, "Mr. Aubrey gave up a part of his rest to the pleasure of perusing a tragedy, in which the author has emulated, with classical spirit and true poetic enthusiasm, the melting pathos and the sublime horrors of the Greek drama."

Lady Melmoth had scarcely finished reading, when the rattling of a carriage in the court-yard announced the arrival of a visitor, who came just in time to dissipate, like a farcical after-piece, the melancholy impression of the foregoing representation.

Lord Newry (who in compliment to the ladies had pretended to be extremely affected whilst Lady Melmoth recited) seemed not very much displeased with this interruption of sighs and tears ;
and,

and, looking out of the window, exclaimed,

“Pray, ladies, who may this strange antediluvian figure, with the three sun-flowers on her cap, be?”

“Oh, it is my old acquaintance, Lady Dowager Davenhill,” said Lady Melmoth; “she has some little peculiarities in her dress and conversation, but her manners are friendly, and she has a very good heart.”

“Peculiar enough indeed, my Lady! Why, she carries a forest of trees upon her gown;—I verily believe your Ladyship’s fan would not be large enough to cover one of the green leaves of that great oak which is sprouting upon her back.”

“My dear Lady Melmoth!” exclaimed Lady Davenhill, entering habited in a stile that would have been exquisitely fashionable about twenty years before, “my dear Lady Mel-

moth! I beg your pardon that I have not been here before this time; and that I did not return your Ladyship's last visit before I left town. A succession of the strangest circumstances prevented me, that you can conceive.—One morning I was absolutely on my way to you, and was stopped; this was the last day but one I was in town;—I had determined to walk (you know what an excellent walker I am) when who should I meet in crossing the square but Lady Hilford's little grandson (her Ladyship brought the child to see me one day, knowing how fond I am of children) so I knew the little thing again immediately, and I took it from the servant who was leading it by the hand (for it runs very prettily) and I almost smothered it with kisses.—A mighty fine child indeed!—Well; so this put me in mind of Mrs. Scott, who, your ladyship

ship knows, is sister to the gentleman that Lady Hilford's third daughter married—a very excellent woman! and she has lately lost a fine little girl; so I resolved to go and make my condolences to the poor distressed lady; and as it was positively a visit of humanity, I thought your Ladyship's goodness of heart would excuse me when I made this apology. And so I was telling Mr. What's-his-name, Mr.—Mr.—Mr.—dear me, I am the worst in the world to remember names. —Your Ladyship knows who I mean; that agreeable gentleman we met at Lady Vandal's conversazione — your Ladyship knows perfectly the person I allude to.”

“Upon my honour, Madam,” said Lady Melmoth, “I do not recollect.”

“No!—don't you?—Mr.—Mr.—dear me! his daughter had a polypus

in her nose—you must certainly recollect now—the circumstance was much talked of at the time;—Mr. Lancet, the surgeon, had a hundred guineas for performing the operation, and she died in three days afterwards.—Oh!—now the name has just entered into my head; it was Mr. ELLIS—aye, Mr. Ellis, that was the name.—Well, I told him the affair of my being stopped in my way to you; and he was quite of my opinion, that your Ladyship would pardon the omission when I informed you of the occasion.”

“Oh, most undoubtedly, Madam; though I have lost much pleasure in your Ladyship’s absence, yet the humane cause of the omission is a very sufficient apology.”

“Yes, those are exactly the words Mr. *Ellis* (that’s his name) said you would make use of when I explained the case to your Ladyship.—Was you

at

at Lady Squeezum's assembly ?—I did not see you whilst I stayed there."

"No, Madam, I was not; I had a cold that kept me at home."

"Nor you, Miss Hampden?" said Lady Davenhill.

"No, Madam."

"Oh you should have been there! there was the greatest croud assembled I almost ever saw! her Ladyship's rooms were so full, one part of the evening, that I believe my delicate lank greyhound Diana could not have entered, even erected upon his hinder feet. It was so intensely hot that every body was expiring; I am heartily sorry, my dear Miss Hampden, you were not there; you would have been vastly amused!"

"Oh, my dear Madam, surely your Ladyship ought rather to congratulate me upon my absence, if the heat was

so intense, and effects so dangerous accrued from it," said Miss H——.

"Oh dear! dear!" cried her Ladyship, in an ironical tone, "but the dazzling assemblage of company made ample amends for every inconvenience of that sort:—Lady Squeezum seemed to tread air! and indeed she had cause; for such innumerable fortunate contingencies had happened to increase the fullness of her rooms that I believe never before united. One in particular was astonishingly lucky: Lady Mommet's assembly was fixed for the same night as Lady Squeezum's; and Lady Squeezum was in dreadful apprehensions that the company would have been so divided that her house would not have been above half full; but Sir James Mommet fortunately dying in the interval, Lady Mommet was forced to shut her doors, which, with other additional circumstances, gave so
delightful

delightful a redundancy to Lady Squeezum's rooms, that she absolutely could not set her feet into them herself, but was obliged to sit upon the staircase, like the pew-opener of an overflowing methodist conventicle."

"Well, I confess, notwithstanding the pleasantry of your Ladyship's description," said Maria, "so great a crowd still appears to me in the light of a dreadful inconvenience."

"Every one has a peculiarity of taste," returned her Ladyship; "for my part, I own, I like a crowd. I enjoy the variety of characters one sees."

"Is a crowd the situation your Ladyship thinks most proper for the contemplation of character?" said Miss Hampden; "I should judge the contrary, I profess."

"Oh, I always judge from physiognomy, and therefore a multitude affords

me more entertainment than a small group."

"Oh, if your Ladyship has a passion for crowding and multitudes," said Lord Newry, "I wish you had seen the crowds that used to resort to my father's seat, in Armagh, to celebrate my coming of age. My Lord kept open house there for several months, during which time two conduits placed on each side the great door ran continually with claret and whisky."

"Splendid indeed, my Lord!"

"Oh, Madam, this was trifling in comparison with the *entertainments* he gave, which were magnificent and profuse in the extreme;—as an instance; there were forty boys every day constantly employed in the single article of picking parsley."

"Bless me!" said Miss Hampden, "then, upon a moderate computation,
my

my Lord, it must take an army of people to dress the dinner compleatly."

"Ah now, my dear Miss Hampden, you seem to think I jest; but upon my honour and truth it is true."

"Amazing!" cried Lady Davenhill.

"Dear Madam, this is nothing at all that I have told you.—I suppose there never was another man in the world that had such a *damned* fine taste for spending money as my father. I have heard him say himself, that when he was a young fellow, he kept an opera girl in Paris, who used to curl her hair every day with bank-bills; and his Lordship has often assured me, that he himself supplied her with this kind of curling-paper for nine or ten months constantly."

"But I should be apprehensive that liquor, given in such unbounded quantities as your Lordship just now spoke

of, must be productive of dangerous consequences to the lower class of people," said Aubrey.

"Oh no, not at all," returned Lord Newry, no way disconcerted; "I have seen them sometimes, it is true, lie dead drunk upon the hall floor, fifty or a hundred at a time perhaps; and there they remained till the next morning, when they all got up and walked away as fresh as larks."

"But, my Lord, among so great a number of men in a state of inebriety, it is wonderful there were no quarrels, and that riot and blood-shed did not ensue."

"Aye, now you speak of riots, Aubrey, I believe something of that kind did happen; for, now I recollect, there might, I fancy, be as many as a dozen men killed in the course of the time."

"All this must occasion a number
9 of

of prosecutions, and cause great commotions," said Aubrey.

"Oh no, not in the least, not in the least; we easily adjust matters of that kind in my country;—our family and some others united interests; money flew about; the effects of these affrays were brought in accidental murder; and the delinquents came off scot-free."

"Pray," said Lady Davenhill, "what do you think of the accounts received from Paris, of the experiments made on the air-balloon?"

"All authentic, Madam, all authentic," cried Lord Newry; "I had a letter, the day before I left town, from one of the party (my particular friend) that ascended in the air-chariot. The letter contained a thousand things infinitely more surprizing than any yet made public, and was attended by a present of very fine *potted larks*, which they caught in their aerial tour."

“ Will your Lordship do us the favour to read that part of the letter which relates the wonderful discoveries you mention.”

“ I would have read it to you all with the greatest pleasure in life,” replied he, “ but the most unfortunate accident in the world happened to that letter; as I was reading it at a window, a sudden blast of wind carried it over the opposite houses; and though I sent my fellow immediately to look for it, the devil a bit of it could he find for the soul of him.”

“ Oh, how distressing!” cried Lady Davenhill; “ how extremely distressing to lose so valuable a letter!”

“ What a vast quantity of inflammable air must have been infused into the letter,” said Aubrey, smiling, “ to cause it to ascend with so astonishing a velocity! But don’t you remember any of the *additional* circumstances, my Lord?”

“ No,

“No, faith; I have a very bad memory for things of that kind; but I know there was an amazing number of surprizing accounts.”

“Oh dear! oh dear!” said Lady Davenhill; “how glad should I have been to have seen the letter, that I might have told its contents to my learned and ingenious friend, Dr. Beetlebrain, the great philosopher, who is to sup with me to-morrow night. Oh, if I could but procure the Doctor a limb of one of those potted larks, he would think himself in heaven whilst he eat it—for he’s an excellent judge of those kind of things.”

“I should have been the happiest fellow in the world to have obliged your ladyship and the Doctor with a taste of them; but unluckily I made a present of them, pot and all, the day before I left town.”

“Bless me; I wonder your lordship
did

did not keep a part of them for your own eating."

"Oh, I have the greatest antipathy that your ladyship can conceive to potted larks—cou'dn't touch one if it would save my life.—So I sent them all to a particular friend of mine, who is a great epicure, and remarkably fond of them."

"Oh, what a loss has the poor dear Doctor had!—to be sure he would have been so happy to have partaken of the balloon larks! By the way, (looking in the glass) I think my *balloon* cap does not fit quite the thing to-day;—it is the first cap I have had made in the modern taste for twenty years. Are not my flowers placed awry, ladies? I believe I am dressed in an odd sort of manner;—quite a strange object,—am I not?"—turning to Aubrey, who stood beside her.

"I confess, I have seen your ladyship better dressed."

"That's

“That’s truth, Mr. Aubrey; I like your frankness,” replied Lady Davenhill, in perfect good humour; “but, I beg your pardon; I ought to have thought of it before:—Pray—I hope Mrs. Aubrey has perfectly recovered the shock of the terrible accident she met with at Bath? I assure you, a great many people laughed at the affair, and called it ridiculous; but, for my part, I know so well what people that have weak nerves suffer, that I defended her to every body that spoke to me of the circumstance; and said, I did not see the thing in half so ludicrous a light as they did. Poor lady! I’m sure, though I have not the honour of knowing her, I sincerely pitied her; and I hope she has entirely recovered the fright. And the poor little dog too”—

“Oh yes; perfectly recovered, Madam,” said he; moving to the other end of the room.

“What

“What was the accident her ladyship alludes to, Aubrey?” asked Lord Newry; who had perceived, from his manner, that he had only feigned a knowledge of the occurrence, to prevent the recital of a long ridiculous story.—“What was the accident her ladyship alludes to?”

“Oh, a trifling affair,” answered he, “not worth relating,”

[Maria, who, before this subject was started, had been sufficiently tired of listening to conversation, which, in the perturbed state of her mind, yielded no sort of amusement, now quitted the room.]

“No, surely, it was not a *trifling* affair,” said Lady Davenhill, who had overheard what Aubrey had said to Lord Newry; “it might have had very dangerous consequences.”

“Pray, what might this accident be, my Lady?” asked Lord Newry, assuming

suming a look of great compassion and sympathy, in order to draw out the story. "Poor Mrs. Aubrey! I feel myself much interested about her;—be kind enough to tell the particulars,"

"Certainly, my Lord; but I can only tell your lordship the affair as I *heard* it, for, as I said before, I have not the honour of knowing the lady. The thing was this—"

Here Aubrey, unobserved by her ladyship, who was wholly engrossed by the pleasure of telling the incident of Mrs. Aubrey, went out at a door that opened upon the terrace, and strolled towards his favourite walk.

C H A P. X.

MARIA, on leaving the parlour, had gone immediately to her own apartment, where leaning on the edge of the window, she fell into a deep and painful meditation on her own situation.

“ Alas !” cried she mentally, “ even you, my dear Miss Hampden, are happy in comparison with others ; the intenseness of your affliction, time may mellow into a soft, though mournful remembrance ; and those fond recollections, and tender regrets, which virtue forbids not, may be numbered among the sweetest pleasures of a susceptible heart. But sure it is misery in the abstract, to be continually struggling

gling to extirpate from the breast a passion, which reason and duty teach us we ought to conquer."

As she thus stood musing, Aubrey, who, since his first meeting with Maria, had found a melancholy pleasure in retracing that part of the garden, now entered the little arbour, followed by two artless and unoffending companions—his dog Florio, and a little tame fawn of Lady Melmoth's. He flung himself on the seat in a melancholy posture; and immediately the fawn, uncourted, laid its little paws, and drooped its innocent head on his breast. Aubrey, struck at the moment with an idea of sympathy, stroaked its coat with an air of fondness that offended poor Florio, who stood by, and begun directly to bark, with evident signs of displeasure.

"My poor animal," said Aubrey, "turning his eyes compassionately upon
on

on the dog, "thou art jealous!—I pity thee!"—and, gently setting down the fawn, he patted the head of his old favourite, who sprung up to receive the caresses his fond and sympathising master lavished upon him.

Maria, unseen, heard all that passed—the scene affected her too keenly. She recollected the look of reproach he had given her, at the moment he thought her listening with complacency to the gross flattery and common-place gallantry of a being so contemptible, in the opinion of sentiment and reflection, as Lord Newry. The idea filled her eyes with tears. "Alas!" said she mentally,—"the esteem, the respect of Aubrey, were the treasures of my heart! These, unless I explain myself, I must lose for ever. Can there be a crime in an anxiety to retain the good opinion of an amiable object?—Surely not. Let me haste then to clear myself from the imputation

putation of indiscriminating vanity, and gross indelicacy, ere the opportunity that now presents itself passes by unused."

Her light step on the grass prevented Aubrey from perceiving her approach, till she was passing the arbour; when he started from his seat with surprise, and advanced two or three steps towards her. Maria stopped; made an imperfect attempt to say something; but, all confusion, and blushing excessively, the period fell unfinished from her lips.

"Does Miss Mordaunt," said Aubrey, somewhat recovering — "the charming, the admirable Miss Mordaunt!—fly from flattering society to solitude and meditation?—mournful propensities of the melancholy and neglected."

"I fancy there are few minds, said Maria," her heart smarting with the wound

wound it had so recently received, "totally void of susceptibility to praise delicately exaggerated; but none, except souls vain and vulgar in the extreme, can be pleased with the abject flattery of corrupt and trifling spirits."

"And yet," returned Aubrey, "women, who at one time appeared very superior beings, have been known to listen, and that with apparent complacency, if not with delight, to the language of adulation, though absolutely untinctured with the delicacy you mention.—I confess I know not how we are to solve this strange contradiction.—Can *you* inform me?" added he, fixing his eyes piercingly on her face.

"I fear, sometimes, from a perverted judgment in the observer (replied Maria) whose fancy might picture complacency there, where an unprejudiced spectator would discover nothing but
disapprobation

disapprobation or disgust, thinly shaded by the veil of common civility."

There was an expression of exquisite softness, mixed with an exculpatory ardour, in her countenance whilst she delivered these words, which fully convinced Aubrey his fears were without foundation; and conveyed to his breast sensations so lively and enchanting, that, forgetting the *general* stile in which she had uttered her oblique, tho' tender little defence, he exclaimed, whilst a soft rapture animated his aspect,—“And do you not? And will you *never* listen to *him*?”

“Never, oh never!” cried Maria, with an involuntary but forcible gesture.

“My God!” exclaimed Aubrey, seizing one of her hands, and pressing it to his bosom, “how happy, yet how miserable a moment is this!”—Maria made a gentle effort to withdraw her hand,—

hand,—he let it go,—and grasping his beating forehead with his own—stopped and turned from her.—His expressions, his distressful attitude, penetrated to the soul of Maria;—she stood still—she looked mournfully upon him—and a soft sigh broke from her aching heart.

“How I pity you,” said she, in a voice scarcely audible; but Aubrey’s ear caught the soothing sound.

“Oh!” cried he, turning round, “Oh, if I make you unhappy, I am doubly miserable!”

The bloom of beauty had given place to a tremulous paleness, and a tear hung on Maria’s cheek, like the dew-drop on the smooth surface of the lily.

“I fear you are ill,” said Aubrey, leading her to a little green bench on one side of the walk: Maria sat down, taking out her salts.

“Oh!”

"Oh!" exclaimed Aubrey, flinging himself on the ground, overcome with anguish, and no longer master of his actions, "what have I not lost?—I have sacrificed every pleasure connected with the heart, with the best affections of the soul; and to what?—Oh God of heaven!—Had any motive noble, worthy, or unavoidable, impelled me; though my heart had bled at one time, it might at another have exulted in the honest consciousness of suffering merit:—then I could have borne inevitable ills well; very well.—But now, now I am doomed to the live-long hell of painful retrospection!—Oh! the heart not naturally selfish, if it *once* sacrifice at the shrine of *interest*, I too fatally feel, forfeits its peace for ever!"—

Here he stopped, leaning his head, covered with his hand, on the side of the seat, in an agony of passion.

“Oh, I cannot bear to see you thus,” cried Maria, rising to depart, “better far perhaps would it be we never meet again.”

Aubrey rose to follow her—“It shall be so, lovely Maria, if *you* command it:—But did you not just now say you pitied me?—Oh let me hear those charming words reiterated, and the soothing sounds shall soften the idea of banishment.—Be assured, the repetition shall subject you to no painful importunities.—I have formed a resolution, which I will not fail to keep, though heaven knows the conflict it would cost me to tear myself—

He was interrupted by a rustling among the shrubs, which proclaimed the approach of some one; and in an instant Lord Newry appeared.

His Lordship pretended to start at the sight of them, and bowing low, with a half-suppressed sneer of anger, said,

said, "*I beg your pardon,*" and mimicking Aubrey's manner, retired. But, desirous of interrupting any further conversation, he quickly returned; and, in order to gratify the envy he felt towards Aubrey for his having gained an opportunity of entertaining Maria alone, raillied them on their *tête-à-tête* walk, in his usual coarse stile, till they had nearly reached the end of the grove, when seeing Miss Hampden glide into a distant walk, he left them to favour her with his company.

During his conversation with them, Maria had laboured under a degree of embarrassment that is indescribable; an embarrassment that pained Aubrey to the heart, as he felt himself the unhappy cause of it.

"Forgive me," said he, the moment his Lordship disappeared; "can you forgive the irksome situation I have occasioned you?—I ought not to have

obtruded my sorrows on your retirement.—Believe me, however, that I did not seek premeditatedly that spot, with the expectation of seeing you; but the impulse of the moment I could not resist; and surely my sufferings——”

“I feel your generosity, Mr. Aubrey,” said Maria hastily, interrupting him, “but I cannot accept an apology that exculpates my own conduct at your expence. — Mine was the impropriety! though it sprung from a motive not in itself blame-worthy.— Alas! I too precipitately sought an opportunity of vindicating myself in your opinion, from the appearance of folly, caprice, and indelicacy.”

The noble, the generous, though unguarded ardency of this confession augmented, if it could admit of augmentation, the tender refined idolatry of her lover.

How

“How truly grand!” exclaimed he, “how exalted is the generous frankness of that sentiment!—Oh you were born always to be the object of my adoration!—You have seen the phrenzy of a passion which neither time nor absence can obliterate!—You have said, *it were better we never meet again*; and your wishes shall be mandates to me.—Be assured I have still fortitude enough left, to prevent, by flight, the sight of my grief from lessening your happiness.—Yes, my most lovely! my adored Maria! you shall see I know how to impose hard and cruel conditions upon myself.—I go from you—I tear myself as it were from myself. Oh, the man who has not resolution sufficient for that trial, when the happiness or the ease of the woman he loves is concerned, is not worthy of her esteem, is not worthy of society!”

“Oh my God!” said Maria, “it pains me to the heart when I recollect with what affectionate delight I have heard Lady Melmoth speak of the time you were to spend with her. How peculiarly unhappy am I in being the means of depriving her of so sweet and lively a pleasure;—rather than it should be so, I would return immediately to my friends, did I know how to leave her Ladyship without explaining myself to them and to her; but that cannot be.”

“Ah, my dear Miss Mordaunt,” returned Aubrey, “your kind heart has small, if any cause for regret on that subject;—in my present state of mind, my company would afford little pleasure to those who are interested in my tranquillity or happiness.—I shall depart in agonies; but it will sometimes lessen my *distress* to call to mind that you have said you compassionate it;

it;—that you pity what you cannot relieve.”

“Pity!” exclaimed Maria; “Oh, believe me, I can never cease to regret, that had I not unfortunately found a lover, I need not have lost the society of one of the most admirable and charming friends in the world. Pity you! indeed I do!—but farewell—this must be our last interview.”

As she spoke, they had reached the harbour.—Maria bowed, waved her hand, shot swiftly across the turf, and went into the castle, leaving Aubrey fixed to the spot, his eyes turned towards the door by which she had entered; whilst on the ear of fancy, the mournful, the tender cadence of her voice seemed still to vibrate, wounding, yet charming, the sense of hearing, like the soul-softening plaints of the stock-dove.

It was but a few moments, however, he enjoyed this melancholy delight—the harmonious accents died away—he awoke as from a soothing dream, to the gloomy consciousness of heart-tickening reality. He darted precipitately into the thickest part of the grove; and, throwing himself on the ground, gave vent to the transports of despairing love.

C H A P. XI.

IT was with difficulty either Aubrey or Maria assumed serenity sufficient to appear at table. After dinner, when she had withdrawn with Lady Melmoth and Miss Hampden, Maria, to hide her sadness and discomposure, proposed that each of them should play and sing an air, and her proposal was instantly complied with.

When they had finished, Miss Hampden tenderly remarked, that Miss Mor-daunt looked indisposed. Maria said she had a head-ach, and imputed her indisposition to her having been somewhat affected by the sight of Lady Davenhill; and took the opportunity of

G 5 mentioning

mentioning to Lady Melmoth her relationship to the Davenhill family.

Lord Davenhill and the father of our heroine were first cousins, educated at the same seminary ; and the superior abilities of the latter had gained him the envy of the former ; who eagerly emulated the conduct of his family, in dropping all intercourse with Mr. Mor-daunt, after his marriage.

Miss Hampden, thinking the air would be of service to Maria's head and spirits, recommended, and offered to accompany her in a shady walk in the garden. Lady Melmoth enforced her request, saying, she would amuse herself with her music till their return. They went.—As they walked past the door of the dining parlour, which stood a little open, Lord Newry saw them ; and (Aubrey having on some pretence left him) he preferred following the ladies to a lengthened *tête-a-tête* with Bacchus.

Bacchus. Just as he was about to leave the room, however, he chanced to recollect some orders he had to give to his servant, and rang the bell. This detained him some minutes; so that when he entered the garden, he had lost sight of the ladies; but soon descried them at a little distance.

As Miss Hampden and Maria approached an artificial wilderness of uncommon extent and wonderful intricacy, the former unthinkingly proposed their screening themselves from the sun by exploring its mazes; to which Maria as thoughtlessly acceded.

They had scarcely gone a few paces, before Lord Newry, who had unknown to them watched their motions, entered on the opposite side. Whilst Aubrey, who from the window of his own apartment saw them all go in; and knowing, as they had no guide, they would lose their way; and, perhaps,

not delighted Maria should be exposed to the necessity of hearing the professions of Lord Newry, resolved to follow them, and conduct the ladies out.

Miss Hampden and Maria had not gone far, before they discovered they had so entangled themselves, that they should not be able to retrace their footsteps; and it unfortunately happened, that in turning about to *reconnoitre* another alley, Maria lost sight of her friend. She called upon her name, and was answered; but, though she distinguished from what part of the wilderness the sound issued, she could not find the way to her. But, in searching, she struck into a more open walk; and a little seat presenting itself, she sat down, fatigued with running, and the heat of the weather. To add to the exation she felt at her perplexed situation, the briars had torn one of her arms in several places; and whilst she was wrapping

wrapping her handkerchief about it, to her infinite and disagreeable surprize, Lord Newry bounded over a thicket opposite to the spot where she sat, and sprung towards her.

“By the Evangelists ! I have found manna in the wilderness !” exclaimed he. Maria rose with the intention of flying from him, but, with a wildness and fire in his eyes that terrified her, he on his knees grasped her hands, conjuring her to hear him for a few moments. Maria told him, she was seeking Miss Hampden, and desired he would not withhold her. But her intreaties were in vain ; for compressing her hands still more ardently, he compelled her to sit ;—protesting that he knew the wilderness perfectly, and would conduct her safely out of it, if she would only indulge him with ten minutes conversation.

“I have already told your Lordship,”

ship," said Maria, "repeatedly, that I feel no attachment to your mind or person; it is highly illiberal, therefore, to importune me further." So saying, she strove, with all her power, to withdraw her hands from his impassioned grasp, but unavailingly.

"Stay, lovely, tho' cruel Miss Mordaunt!" cried he; for your own sake, if not for mine;—consider, if you go without me, you will again lose your way."

"I do not wish you to accompany me, my Lord; I only wish to free myself from your ungenerous importunities."

Here she broke from him, but he caught hold of her, and again drew her to the seat.

"Cruel Maria!" cried Lord Newry, his eyes flashing fire whilst he snatched her to his breast—"by the great God that made me, unless you say something
to

to sooth the despair and madness that fires my soul, I'll open a passage to my heart, and throw it bleeding at your feet !”

“ Fie, fie, my Lord, for shame ! forbear this unmanly rant, that sinks you to a level with the savage race,” cried Maria, scornfully, and struggling to break from his hold.

“ By all that's good, you shall not thus escape me ! I have adored ever since the first moment I beheld you ; I detest the ungenerous, sordid fetters of marriage—but accept my ardent love, and you may command my life, my soul, my fortune as your own. Tell me what I shall do to serve you ; give me but your love, and you shall find me your most submissive slave. I'd pawn my reversion of heaven, if it would procure a wish of yours, that could not be obtained by any other means.”

“ You shock my very soul,” cried
Maria ;

Maria; "and if you do not instantly let me go, my cries shall expose your base design."

"Were Aubrey here," said Lord Newry, passionately, "not even the solitude of this recess, would make you shrink at being alone with him."

"No," replied Maria, "I should have no cause; his own honour would teach him to be the guardian of mine."

Leave all these nice distinctions," said Lord Newry, "that owe their birth to coldness.—Retirement! opportunity! every thing conspires, to increase the fury of my passion!—By heavens! you shall not thus escape me."

Saying these words, he caught her in his arms, with an impetuosity that heightened her terrors, and caused her to shriek aloud. Whilst she was struggling to disengage herself, and breathless with exertion, Aubrey appeared before

fore them.—Lord Newry, for a moment, seemed petrified with surprize; and a scream of joy burst from Maria.

“How have you dared, my Lord,” cried Aubrey, his countenance glowing with the fire of indignation; “how have you dared to insult a woman of honour, under my immediate protection, as the guest of Lady Melmoth?”

“How have I dared, Sir?” reiterated Lord Newry, biting his lips; “quit this place immediately with me; and I will answer your imperious interrogatories in a proper manner.

“I will attend you instantly, my Lord,” said Aubrey, haughtily.

Maria, wild and distracted, threw herself between them, beseeching them to lay aside their animosity. Her looks, her attitude, wounded the feeling heart of Aubrey. He stopped; and casting a glance at Lord Newry, that bade him mark her distress, said, in a low, but firm

firm voice, "We may meet again, my Lord, before the day closes."

"Now, Sir! now is the time!" said his lordship,—fury breaking from his eyes.

"It is well," said Aubrey; "let us go; I believe I best know the way out—follow me, my Lord." Saying which, he leaped over a little hedge; and Lord Newry following his example, they were out of the sight of Maria in a moment, who had stood some minutes gazing, without sense or motion. When she returned to the horrors of reflection, she recollected she had heard them mention the little grove of limes, and concluded they were flying to the castle to fetch pistols, in order to end their contention there. Wrought up to madness by this idea, she flew frantically about, striving to make her way out of the wilderness; but for some time only perplexed herself the more. At length
she

she got out, though with much difficulty, and ran towards the grove. As she approached, Lord Newry rushed forth, one of his arms bound with a handkerchief.

“Savage!” cried Maria, seizing the skirt of his coat as he passed her, “what hast thou done?”

“Detain me not, Madam,” said he; “your own obstinacy hath done every thing;—curse on your foolish sex. I am going to send assistance.” As he spoke, he left her—springing over hedges and bushes, like one pursued by the Furies. Maria, now winged by despair, ran to the fatal spot. At the foot of the pedestal she found Aubrey, reclined on the grass, faint with the loss of blood, and pale as the sculptured resemblance of his features.

“Oh God!” cried she,—“the sun, which looks on all, sees not a wretch like me!” Scarcely had she
strength

strength to reach his side, when, bending on her knees, her terror and grief for the moment incapacitating her from affording him the least relief, she sunk, in an agony of woe, upon his bleeding bosom. Aubrey, who supposed she had swooned, lifted up his languid head, and, incapable of assisting her, uttered a deep and piercing sigh. The sound roused Maria from her lethargy of grief; and, raising herself, she saw the handkerchief he had applied to his wound drenched in blood. She instantly tore, with trembling haste, part of the muslin dress she wore, applying it as a styptic. And, having in some degree stopped the sanguinary effusion, she raised his head from the ground, holding her salts to his nostrils. In a little time, he so much revived as to be able to express his gratitude, for her tender and assiduous exertions, articulately.

“How kind—how infinitely kind
are

are your attentions," said he, holding fast her hand, as she knelt; "but do not longer alarm your gentle spirits; when the surgeon arrives, I shall soon get better."

"Oh why," said Maria, grief and tenderness absorbing every faculty of her soul, and weeping mournfully, "why did you risk a life so dear to every one?"

"*So dear!* oh heavens!" cried Aubrey, a lambent ray illumining his countenance whilst he gazed upon her, "Ah, my sweet Maria, I had promised to leave the spot which contained you; and I felt agonies so great at the thought, that what *you* term a cruel risk, *I* joyfully embraced as a happy chance of losing a life I could not possess without misery:—Oh! to have lost it in your cause I could have died content.

"Ah," said Maria, gazing sorrowfully
on

on his face, "how pale you look!—Merciful heaven!—will they never come—perhaps Lord Newry has neglected to order a surgeon to be sent for;—perhaps no one but my miserable self is yet acquainted with the fatal intelligence.—Oh my loved, adored, respected Lady Melmoth, how shall I meet your eyes, after having occasioned this disaster?—Let me fly to the castle—Lord Newry has only provided for his *own* safety, and neglected *yours*.—My God! what will become of me?"

"Oh stay," said Aubrey, striving, with the little strength he possessed, to detain her, "do not leave me,—I exist but in your presence;—your fears preface too rapidly, too severely; he cannot be so lost to honour, to humanity.—Oh stay! and do not further agitate your tender frame, already too

much wearied with emotion and fatigue."

"I cannot bear to see you thus," reiterated Maria, "let me go;—let me fly;—and thus saying, she broke from him and ran a few paces—when, hearing the sound of feet, she stopped, and in an instant Lady Melmoth, a surgeon, and some of her ladyship's servants, came up to her.

"Where is my brother," cried Lady Melmoth, wildly, "where is he? guide us to him."

Maria could make no answer, but by flying immediately to the place.

Lady Melmoth, the moment she cast her eyes on the pale aspect and bleeding form of her brother, uttered a scream of horror; and kneeling beside him, pressed her lips to his wan cheek

"Oh, my beloved Edward! my dear brother!" cried she; "how keen must

must have been the provocation that could have urged thy sweet nature, to so direful, so desperate an encounter !”

Aubrey, by this time grown weak and debilitated in the extreme from the loss of blood, could only return, to this effusion of affection, a faint pressure of the hand:—and the surgeon, perceiving the situation of his patient, begged the ladies to retire, whilst he examined the wound. After having again pressed the pallid lips of Aubrey, with a look of tenderness and affection, whilst her fast-flowing tears watered his bosom, she arose from the ground ; and, turning to Maria,—“ Come, my love,” said she, “ we will go into the next walk ; and the moment Mr. Johnson has *pronounced*,” (added she to her servants) “ bring us word.”

Lady Melmoth had spoken twice to Maria, without being heard ; she stood

“ Like a dead lover’s statue on his tomb”—

her

her hands laid across each other, and pressed hard upon her bosom; her eyes raised to heaven,—the big drops standing on her tingleless cheeks,—and grief and anguish spread o'er all her features.

“Come, my love,” reiterated her ladyship, taking her hand, “we will go.”

Maria, recovering from her bitter reverie, mournfully followed her; but without uttering a word, till they had got to a considerable distance.—“I can go no farther,” said her ladyship; “I cannot leave the grove, whilst in this dreadful uncertainty.” So saying, she leant against a tree, still holding the hand of Maria, who, overcome with grief, now threw herself on her knees before her.

“Can you—will you, most dear Madam! ever look upon me again, but with horror and detestation?—when you shall know, it was in revenging an in-

sult offered to me, your brother received the wound for which your heart now bleeds—And oh ! which has murdered my peace for ever.”

“ Look upon you with horror, my sweet friend !—Oh no !” cried her ladyship, raising her, and folding her to her bosom ;—“ rather let us mingle our tears together ; for equally, I believe, do we suffer.—Ah, I have long known my dear Edward unhappy ; but till to-day, I knew not the full extent of his wretchedness :—to-day he wounded me with the intelligence, that he meant to leave me to-morrow. Fatally, fatally, I fear, will his resolve be retarded.”

“ He has told you then,” cried Maria, “ that I have been the means of adding to his sorrows. You know that for me he has risked his life : and yet you still call me friend ;—you still hold me to your generous heart.—How nobly

bly consistent, how benevolently kind, how sweetly sympathetic, is every part of your conduct ! Ah ! my dear Miss Hampden, I see even the enthusiastic warmth of your spirit did not cause you to exaggerate ; you pourtray'd with the *bold*, but *correct*, pencil of truth."

At this moment they saw a servant coming towards them ; and walked forward, with trembling impatience, to meet him.

The surgeon had dressed Aubrey's wounds ; and had pronounced that, with extreme quietness and care, he might recover in a short time ; but that much was to be apprehended from a fever, or from mental agitation. The man added, that he had been placed on a bier, and the servants were then carrying him to the house.

The ladies, much comforted, now

H 2

walked

walked towards the castle, with all the speed they could make.

Lord Newry, during the scene of affliction I have related, had begun his journey to London. It seems, he had concluded Aubrey mortally wounded; and, having scrambled out of the garden, ran to the castle; when calling for his valet, and taking him aside—"Fly," cried he, "as if all hell was at your heels, and fetch the first surgeon you can find; when you return, tell the servant to conduct him to the little grove of limes. An unfortunate affair has happened;—I am going to the inn to order the chariot, and shall take the road to London the moment the horses are put to.—Fly, and perform what I have told you,—and then follow me."

CHAP.

C H A P. XII.

THE delicate frame of Maria, overcome with the terrors and conflicts to which this day of calamity had subjected her, was seized on the evening with a fever, which, before morning, had risen to so great a height, that an actual delirium bewildered her faculties; and her life became doubtful for several days. Lady Melmoth, with the tenderest assiduity, divided her cares between her brother and Maria; but Miss Hampden, involved in the deepest affliction, scarcely stirred (but to minister to her relief) from the bed-side of her fair friend during the whole of her illness.

Aubrey, as the surgeon had prognosticated, was soon in a fair way of recovery ;—but Maria, for several weeks after she was pronounced out of danger, remained in a state so weak and enervated as to be confined to her own apartment.

Lady Melmoth's anxiety, during their illness, had been much increased by a very momentous contingency.

A messenger arrived at the castle the third day after the rencountre of Aubrey and Lord Newry ; and, on announcing that he had some important intelligence to communicate to the former, he was conducted to Lady Melmoth, whom he informed, that Mrs. Aubrey then lay dead at Bath.

Her ladyship, knowing the dangerous consequences a surprize of this sort, imprudently communicated to him, might have on her brother's health, carefully instructed those of her people who attended

tended him, not to mention any thing respecting this incident : and wrote immediately to a near relation, whom she requested to act on the occasion for him.

The first day however after Aubrey had quitted his own apartment, Lady Melmoth happened to find him sitting alone, in a gloomy posture, at the bottom of the little gallery we have before mentioned, and being no longer afraid of injuring his health, she took that opportunity of making him acquainted with the change in his affairs, — but had scarcely given him the information, before a servant announced that a visitor waited to see her ladyship ; and she left Aubrey to the free indulgence of those reflections her communication had inspired.

He had hardly in any degree collected his ideas, confused and scattered by the intelligence he had received, when they

were again instantaneously deranged by the unexpected presence of Maria, who came to walk in the gallery, not having yet ventured into the garden. As she entered with her back toward the place where Aubrey sat, she imagined herself alone; and moving slowly to one of the Gothic arches, stopped and leant pensively against it, to enjoy the pleasure of contemplating the fine portrait which had once inspired her with so much terror.

The feelings of Maria had hitherto been much more peaceful since her illness than before. The aids of religion and philosophy had brought her mind to view the prospects of her future life with a calm though melancholy turn of thought. But the sight of the wounded and bleeding figure, recalled to her ideas the scenes in which she had so lately borne a distressful part, with a force that began to awaken her every nerve
to

to anguish.—She strove however to suppress those poignant sensations, and by degrees, the mild spirit of resignation to Providence again breathed its benignant influence over her wounded heart.—

“Sweet heaven!” cried she, raising her tearful eyes, “I thank thee that thou didst not, by depriving him of life, fill up the bitter measure of my sorrows:—I thank thee that I have not at this moment the killing reflection, that his generous rashness in my defence steeped a parent’s couch in tears; or moistened with the drops of never-ending regret the tender eyes of an affectionate sister.—Oh! I have suffered much, [but let me remember, with gratitude, he yet lives!”

The attitude in which she uttered these words, gave the most elegant profile in the world to the sight of Aubrey; than which nothing could be more affecting:—Sickness had increas-

ed, if possible, the delicacy of her features; whilst the feelings of the moment heightened their native expression of softness and sentiment into something of a seraphic meekness and heavenly elevation

Aubrey, charmed to rapture, moved towards her, exclaiming—"Lovely, angelic Maria!"—

She started at the sound of his voice; and, turning round, with the tremulous respiration of surprize and confusion, uttered—"Oh Mr. Aubrey!" her eyes involuntarily fixed on the ground.

"How I rejoice, Miss Mordaunt," said he, "to see you in so happy a measure restored to health!—and how I regret that the conduct of any guest in this house should have been the means of destroying it!"

"With how much sincerity may I return the same compliment!" replied Maria, filled with painful apprehensions
I that

that he had heard her little soliloquy ;
 “ not one of your friends, Mr. Aubrey,
 can more truly have deplored your dan-
 gerous confinement ;—not one perhaps
 so much, for *I* had to lament having
 been the unhappy occasion.”

“ Oh, I believe you,” cried Aubrey,
 taking one of her hands and ardently
 pressing it to his lips ; “ you are the
 very soul of tenderness and truth.—
 Every sentiment I hear breathed from
 those lips, every fresh view of that
 lovely form, raises my sensibility to your
 virtues, and my fond admiration of your
 attractions to idolizing enthusiasm !—
 an enthusiasm that, till this moment, I
 never felt without pain.—But Hope, the
 sweet inspirer Hope, now cheers my
 heart, and enlivens my long dejected
 spirit !”

Startled by the ardency of his expres-
 sions, after his solemn and voluntary pro-
 mise never again to introduce the sub-

ject of his passion ; and yet more surprized at the looks of hope and pleasure which animated his countenance whilst he spoke ; Maria could impute his altered manner to nothing but his having formed improper hopes from the expressions he had overheard ; and, shocked at this suspicion, she hastily replied,

“ From my sentiments, Mr. Aubrey, you have nothing more to hope, than when your seemingly respectful attachment influenced you to a voluntary promise of silence on this head, and even prompted you to a resolution of banishing yourself from this place.—Oh, think not my heart so weak (soft as I confess it is) that it will not rise to condemn the object it most valued, when the virtues that inspired its attachment disappear or grow fewer !”

As she spoke she turned from him to depart ; but, striving to detain her with gentle force and tender eagerness, he exclaimed,

“ Stay,

"Stay, Maria! my life! my love! Stay but whilst I explain to you"—

"I cannot, I must not listen to you," replied Maria, interrupting him, with all the firmness she could assume; "you ought not to ask me to listen to you.—You can have no explanation to make, that will not lessen you in my estimation; and I will not do you the injustice to hear you utter what would perhaps tarnish the honour of your character for ever in my opinion.—I would not have *conviction*—Oh let it always remain a *doubt* with me, that Aubrey ever wished to plead a wrong cause."

"I wish to plead *no wrong cause*, my Maria," returned he; "I only wish to repeat to you how fondly my heart rests on the hope of your partiality for all its future happiness; and to tell you, that no ties now exist which make it improper for me to solicit from you that soft confession which only can make me *desire*, I had almost said, *endure* life."

Maria,

Maria, agitated by a variety of emotions, stood silent some moments, without even looking upon him.—

“Oh my God!” exclaimed he, “you make no answer; you take no part in what concerns me!”—

“Do not injure my friendship so much,” said Maria; “be assured, Mr. Aubrey, that whatever brings peace to your mind must give pleasure to mine. Suffer me now to leave you; I have exhausted my spirits in this conversation;—do not detain me.”

“Oh heavens!” cried he, “I have then deceived myself.—I fondly flattered my imagination you felt a degree of partiality for me; but your coldness now convinces me I had no farther interest in your heart, than what your knowledge of my sorrows created.—The cause removed, your attachment ceases.—Oh Maria! confess that you have this moment read the bottom of your heart!—you see the
state

state of mine, and the tenderness of your disposition makes you dread to tell me you are indifferent.—If I must be wretched, tell me so this instant!—After you have pronounced my destiny, I will not detain you a moment;—I could not bear to hear you *twice* say, I was wholly indifferent to you.”

“You cannot, you do not believe me so,” replied Maria; “ought I to be insensible to the worth of the preserver of my life and my honour?”

“Is a sentiment of gratitude all the return you can make, Maria, to the ardent tenderness of my soul? I hoped, fondly hoped it was not; let me still think so. For heaven’s sake, say something to calm my agitated heart!—if it be but one word of pity and kindness!—I flew to you with transport, and you freeze me with looks and expressions of the coldest import!—I cannot describe to you what I feel; the
violent

violent transitions my mind has gone through within these few minutes are not to be imagined."

The impatience with which he spoke these words affected Maria in the most forcible manner.

"Alas, Mr. Aubrey! why will you give me occasion to reproach you with indelicacy?" said she, with a look and tone of voice that mingled tenderness with reproof; "why will you force me to utter, what I fear you have already too plainly seen?—Oh! you know I am not indifferent to your merits."

"Why then, my sweet Maria," said Aubrey, "why that estranged look, when I first spoke to you of the change in my situation?—And wherefore these tears?"

"I know not how to explain the sensation," replied Maria, "but the sight of your transports, when you first told me of the alteration in your affairs, had a quite

quite contrary effect on *my* spirits.— Oh ! there is something in the idea of *rejoicing* at obtaining a good, that was not to be gained but by another's death, that chills the soul !—If, therefore, it is an *unnatural* sensation to rejoice, it must certainly be a wrong one ; at least it appears so to me.”

“ Your reasoning, my charming little philosopher,” said Aubrey, smiling, “ seems to partake somewhat of that gloomy tinge which ill health and weak spirits are apt to throw over the mind. It is true, there are forms exacted by the world, which should be immutable ; the decencies and decorums of life ought not to be broken in upon. But I see no occasion why (if I may use the expression) we should *act a farce before our own hearts* ; why we should attempt to inspire ourselves with feelings of regret that do not flow spontaneous, or for which there is no cause.—I recollect a
sentiment

sentiment of your favourite Rousseau on this subject;—‘Lamentations for the dead,’ says he, ‘afford a pleasing proof of the sensibility of our nature, but are certainly no part of our duty.—If then there is no real virtue in mourning the death even of a parent; to affect what we do not feel must be wrong; for hypocrisy is always criminal.’

“At present I have so bad a head-ach” said Maria, smiling, “that I cannot enter into an investigation of the truth of your reasoning; permit me therefore to leave you;” and so saying she hastily glided away.

C H A P. XIII.

THE moment Maria got into her own apartment, she threw herself hastily on her chair, and leaning her head on a table, involved in thought, in that posture remained till she heard somebody rap at the door: It was Lady Melmoth's woman; who, on being admitted, delivered to her a letter:—

“From whom does it come?” said she, perceiving it had no post-mark.

“I don't know, Madam; a countryman brought it, — but did not wait for an answer,” replied the girl, and retired.

Maria impatiently broke the seal, and to her infinite consternation, read as follows:

“Madam,

“ Madam,

“ Nothing but the most perfect information of the rectitude of your heart, and the sweetness of your disposition, could have induced me to wish, much less request, an interview with you:—I have some particulars to unfold, concerning a person now high in your estimation, that may save you from much future misery, and afford you an opportunity of serving one, who, though unfortunate, will not, I trust, be found undeserving your sympathy and assistance. I have scarcely a hope that you will do me the honour of calling upon me some time to-morrow, as the under-written address directs: but if your desire of mitigating distress should be strong enough to influence you to overlook the want of etiquette in my introduction to you—I must intreat you will not bring any one with you, as that circumstance would entirely destroy the
intention

intention with which I solicit this interview, namely, that of mutual confidence and mutual service.

“ I am, Madam, with the greatest esteem and admiration, your most obedient servant and well-wisher.

“ Please to enquire for Mrs. Rawlinson, at Wilton Farm.”

Various were the feelings of Maria on the perusal of this letter ; she could not conceive to whom the writer alluded, as the *person high in her estimation*.— Her partial sentiments for Aubrey had never passed the confines of her own breast ; and therefore to him she did not apprehend it had reference.

Her unsuspecting turn of mind, and the benevolence of her heart, quickly made her determine to go :—but prudence, after some minutes reflection, represented it to her as dangerous and improper. But happening again to examine the direction inclosed in the letter, she recollected that the farm-house,

at

at which she was desired to call, belonged to Lady Melmoth; remembering that one day, on their return from a walk, her ladyship stopped and spoke to the farmer and his wife, whom she afterwards commended as good tenants and worthy people. Maria therefore concluded no harm could happen to her under their roof;—and this recollection fixed her wavering purpose.

Her next concern was how to go without the knowledge of the family: and the thought presented itself, of rising early, and going out through the garden gate, as she had often done, and taken a solitary walk before Miss Hampden awakened.

C H A P. XIV.

MARIA enquired for the writer of the letter by the name mentioned in it:—And as the person of the house conducted her through a little passage to the apartment of the lady, which lay at the end of it, the door being open, she saw a woman of an elegant and attractive form, and whose age did not seem to exceed five and twenty, smoothing the fair locks of a little girl of about four or five years old:—As Maria approached, she rose from her seat, and gracefully, though not without a degree of confusion, thanked her for the generous and liberal attention she had paid to her invitation, assuring her she should have no cause to regret
the

the confidence she had placed in her. The beauty of this lady's person, the graces of her manner, united to the peculiarity of her situation, and the idea of her being in some kind of distress, and having applied to her for relief, affected Maria in the most forcible manner; and it appeared to her that she had never before seen an object so interesting. She replied to the lady's expressions,—“That the ingenuousness of her countenance and manner left her nothing to doubt.” The lady bowed, and seemed preparing to give an account of her motives for requesting the interview; when Maria, in order to afford her time for recollection, with great sweetness, begun to caress and play with the child. In raising it to her lap, however, she happened to cast her eyes on a miniature which hung from a ribband round its neck; struck motionless with surprise, she perceived that it bore a strong resemblance

semblance to Aubrey, and continued viewing it for some moments with breathless astonishment. The features and air of the person were so strongly marked, that it was impossible for her to persuade herself it was an accidental likeness;—and she now looked on the lady, and now on the picture, with glances of the most piercing inquiry.—Some minutes elapsed before either of them could speak;—but at length the fair stranger exclaimed, in a tremulous tone of voice:—

“Alas! my dear Madam, this surprise is only a prelude to greater and more affecting ones.”

Maria, sickening at the heart with terror and apprehensions, leant back in her chair; and the lady continued for some time in a situation incapable of affording her any consolation or assistance.

Maria first broke silence.

I

“Oh

“ Oh Madam,” exclaimed she, “ for heaven’s sake, explain to me the meaning of all this !—If I have any part in it— if I can be of any service to you, do not delay to make the necessary communications.”

“ I will obey you, Madam,” returned she, wiping the tears mournfully from her eyes, “ but I must first intreat your patience, whilst I make myself and some particulars of my ill-fated life known to you.”

“ Relate every thing, Madam,” said Maria, with infinite tenderness, though overwhelmed with anxiety, “ relate every thing in the manner most agreeable to yourself ;— but proceed, Oh proceed without delay !”

“ I will not delay,” replied the lady, instantly entering on her story.

“ My real name is Villars ;— my father was a lieutenant in the army ; and the commission he bore, his whole reve-

nue;—I was his only child;—my mother died whilst I was an infant;—and at the age of nineteen, I had the misfortune to lose my father. A few months before his death, he had become acquainted with Mr. Aubrey, who, interested by the worth and integrity of his character, had promised to exert himself warmly in his favour with the colonel of his regiment, in order to procure his advancement.

“ During their acquaintance, short as it had been, Mr. Aubrey had frequently visited at our house:—the charms of his conversation, and the elegance and delicacy of his manners, but more than all, the friendship he professed for my father, and the zeal with which he entered into his concerns, gained him my most favourable opinion. It happened however (I believe he had been out of Town) that during my father’s illness he came not

once to see us till the fatal day of his death, when he called to inform him that he had obtained a promise of a captain's commission for him—and alas! to see him expire. A relation took charge of the funeral.—Involved in the deepest affliction, I was for several days unable to see any one during that time. Mr. Aubrey either called himself (with an appearance of extreme anxiety) or sent to enquire after my health every day. About a week after the interment of my father, he called, requesting, if it were possible for me to suffer the interruption, that I would see him.—I admitted him.—The recollection of his behaviour to my father, and his attention to me since his death, joined to the amiable opinion I before entertained of him, affected me in an extreme degree.—I could not speak,—I could not thank him—tears interrupted my speech.—

Mr.

Mr. Aubrey condoled with me in a manner the most soothing, elegant, and respectful; intreating, if there was any thing in which he could serve me, that I would command him. In short, he omitted nothing that a feeling and affectionate heart could suggest on such an occasion. When he took his leave, he begged I would do him the honour to number him among my friends, and sometimes admit him to visit me.

“ This request, so earnestly made, my gratitude would not permit me to deny; and I saw him frequently at the house of a relation, with whom I went to reside after the death of my father. Unfortunate and ever to be lamented was this permission! The frequency of his visits, the ardency with which he interested himself in every thing that concerned me, and the evident distraction of his manner at times, soon spoke too plainly, that I had in-

spired him with a violent and tender passion. My own heart was still a prey to sadness and affliction ; a situation of all others, perhaps, the most favourable to love. Grief enervates the soul, and renders it vulnerable to soft and tender impressions of every kind. It is likewise disposed to seek participation, and naturally attaches itself to every thing that wears the aspect of comfort or consolation. Attachments thus formed, are, I believe, more frequently durable, than those commenced under happier auspices. In the latter case, the impression may only have penetrated the surface ; in the former, it has sunk to the bottom of the heart. But I seek not to palliate my fault. You, Madam, have a heart that can feel for weaknesses it never knew. Alas ! it pains me to the soul to see the distress I occasion you ; but it is necessary I should go on.—I will be brief.

“ Mr.

“Mr. Aubrey so repeatedly and so pathetically deplored to me the unhappiness of his own situation, and the added misery he had sustained since he knew me, that my soul caught the contagious softness ; and, in an evil hour, I submitted to give up honour, friends, every thing—to live with the man I adored :—but under a solemn, though verbal, promise of marriage, if I should survive his wife, which the disparity of our ages made probable.”

“Oh, let me hear no more !” cried Maria, resting her forehead on her hands in an agony ; “I now know how it is you wish me to serve you. Oh, trust me, I will not obstruct—yes, rely upon me.—I give him up—I renounce him for ever !—Yes, you have my irrevocable word of honour—but, in pity, let me hear no more. Oh ! you have dissipated the fond and enthusiastic admiration of his worth, which

has so long alternately pained and delighted my heart!—but the blow has crushed me to the earth. Yes, you may rely on my resolution,”—cried she, shedding a torrent of tears, and throwing herself back in her chair.

“Oh! how wretched am I, to be the communicator of intelligence so afflicting,” said the lady; “but I am——”

“Tell me, Madam! be kind enough to explain to me,” interrupted Maria, hastily, “how you became acquainted with Mr. Aubrey’s sentiments of me.”

“From the coldness and infrequency of his letters, since his residence at the castle, I was fearful,” replied she, “indifference, or some new object, had taken possession of his heart; and I was soon painfully impelled to be of the latter opinion.—A gentleman, who had for some years stiled himself the friend of Mr. Aubrey, called upon me, and (I am inclined to think with no honourable

honourable intention) told me of the duel; and that he had heard the matter of contention arose about a very beautiful young lady, then at Lady Melmoth's. Perceiving the distress into which he had thrown me, he pretended to apologize for his abrupt intelligence, and soon withdrew. My own servant, (who had lived with me ever since I left my friends, and was strongly attached to me) seeing my anxiety, which it was impossible for me to conceal, begged to partake my uneasiness. As she was well acquainted with all my situation, I told her every thing that had been related to me; and a means of coming at the truth of what I had been informed, instantly occurred to her. She had a cousin who lived with Lady Melmoth; and from whom (having formerly served her) she could gain any intelligence. To this young woman she immediately wrote, and

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learnt from her, that a duel had actually been fought between Mr. Aubrey and Lord Newry, about a lady who had spent the summer with Lady Melmoth. That she was extremely beautiful, and that she had often heard Lady Melmoth and Miss Hampden speak in raptures of her understanding and accomplishments. Adding, that she knew Mr. Aubrey had a strong partiality for Miss Mor-daunt; and then related a conversation in the garden she had overheard, to justify her assertion. This information completed my misery; and on the death of Mrs. Aubrey, which happened soon afterwards, I conceived the most despairing ideas; concluding, that the transports of a violent passion would induce him to break his vows to me, and marry the new object of his affections.—Oh, my God! what have I not suffered?—At length, the idea, that if I could, by unfolding to you my melancholy

choly story, prevent your accepting him, time might wear out an hopeless attachment, and return to me his wandering heart. With this hope, I came here ten days ago, and have waited impatiently for intelligence from Lady Melmoth's maid, when you appeared sufficiently recovered to make it probable you would be able to walk so far, should you be inclined to attend to my letter. Oh, Madam! you have been represented to me as the most amiable of your sex. It is true you have said—and I doubt not your generosity—that you give him up; that you renounce him for ever. But, notwithstanding you should inflexibly preserve that resolution, if you should impart to him, or any part of his family, the discovery I have made—the resentment he would feel towards me, as the destroyer of his hopes, might irrecoverably estrange from me his affections.—

Oh ! unless you have resolution enough to preserve secret your *real* motive for refusing him,—I have no hope, no prospect, of the smallest ray of comfort !”

“ I have said, Madam,” replied Maria, “ you might depend on me :—and be assured, that I will be no bar to any prospect of future happiness you may entertain. Yes, be comforted ! You have dispelled the charm that had captivated my fancy ; and may safely rely on my resolution.”

She now arose to depart, with a degree of fancied heroism ; but before she could reach the door of the room in which they sat, it opened—and the entrance of the little girl she had before seen, gave a new assault to her heart. She stooped down ; she wreathed her tender arms about its little form ; and, in bidding farewell to this innocent charmer, tears interrupted her words. This effusion of softness appeared to
alarm

alarm the lady; and she softly exclaimed, in a tone that implied a doubt of the inflexibility of Maria's determination—"Oh heavens! my heart trembles for the event."

Maria perceiving her apprehensions—"Be not alarmed, Madam," said she; "tho' I do not conceal from you the keenness of my emotions,—be assured, it is in the strength of my feelings, part of your security lies: trust me, my sensibility is not confined to my own sorrows." So saying, she bowed, and, striving to hide the painful workings of her heart, under a look of sweetness and composure, withdrew.

She supported herself with tolerable firmness, till she got out of sight of the house; when, overcome with, and no longer able to restrain her griefs, she threw herself on the ground beside a little hillock; and, pressing her lovely forehead against the turf, gave way to
the

the most poignant complainings. In this situation she continued many minutes. At length her reason returned; and she blamed herself for giving way to the torturing weakness. She rose from the ground;—alternately moving slowly forwards, her mind racked with forming plans for her future conduct;—or, darting precipitately along, as if trying to fly from thought and reflection: and now again, abruptly stopping, and clasping her hands, she mourned to the passing winds, like one bereft of reason.

In this distracted state of mind Maria remained, till she perceived her near approach to the castle, when she began to struggle for more composure of manner, to enable her to fulfil the promise of secrecy she had made.

C H A P.

C H A P. XV.

WHEN our fair heroine got into the castle, she hastened to her own chamber, where she found Miss Hampden just preparing to go down to breakfast. On seeing Maria, she eagerly exclaimed, with an earnestness peculiar to herself,—“My dear Miss Mordaunt, how pale and fatigued you look!”

Maria sat down, scarcely able to utter a word; but, having applied her salts, she somewhat recovered; and, thanking Miss Hampden for her affectionate concern, she imputed her illness to the length of the walk she had taken. Miss Hampden advised her to lie down on the bed, telling her, she would send somebody

somebody with breakfast for her. Maria acceded to her proposal, but without hope of mental ease or refreshment.

As soon as breakfast was over in the parlour, Lady Melmoth accompanied Miss Hampden to speak to Maria; who, when her ladyship came into the room, was, with the assistance of a servant, making some alterations in her dress. Lady Melmoth concluded from this circumstance, and the air of spirit with which she forced herself to appear, that she was much better; and, when she had dismissed the attendant, said to her—

“ My dear Miss Mordaunt, if it will be agreeable to you, we will take a ride as far as Davenhill Park this morning. Ever since you told me your relationship to that family, I have been impatient to introduce you to Lady Davenhill; who, I think, if I have any penetration, is too liberal minded, and

too

too good a woman, not to pay proper respect to so amiable a part of her lord's family. And I doubt not but she will be anxious to make amends to you, for the unkindness of Lord Davenhill's conduct to your father."

At another time, doubts and fears of what reception she might have from Lady Davenhill, would have made the idea of this visit irksome to Maria; but her mind now only seemed to be capable of admitting unhappiness from one quarter; and was totally unconcerned, whether she was going to experience gentle or harsh treatment at Davenhill Park, any otherwise, than that the former would afford her an opportunity of consulting Lady Davenhill, how she should act in her present critical situation; for it immediately occurred to her, that her ladyship's advice and protection might, at this time, be of peculiar service to her; as she had prohibited

bited herself from revealing her distress to any one who was at all connected with Aubrey's family. She answered, therefore, by thanking Lady Melmoth for the lively concern she took in her welfare ; and said, she would gladly attend her ladyship.

“ I am pleased,” replied Lady Melmoth, “ that you so readily agree to my proposal ; as, I think, if you are not already too much fatigued, the air and exercise will be of service to you. My brother was apprehensive your spirits might be too much agitated with this visit ; imagining, I suppose, that you would be flurried to death, with being snatched from uncle to aunt, and from cousin to cousin, like poor Tom Jenkins in the Critic. But I told him, I did not expect *our family discovery* would be received in the way one reads of in poetry and plays ; for Lady Davenhill, tho' friendly and good-humoured

moured in the extreme, has none of those ardent sensibilities which produce affecting scenes. But be quick, my love, in making what alteration you intend in your dress; I will order the coach immediately; and, if you please, we will set out as soon as possible."—Maria, bowing, said she would obey; and her ladyship quitted the room.

When Maria got down stairs, she found Lady Melmoth and Aubrey in the parlour; the former with her cloak and gloves on, ready to step into the coach. At sight of Aubrey, the heart of our fair heroine alternately melted with tenderness, and sickened with the agonizing effort of suppressing hope and pleasure. She returned his compliments of the morning with all the composure she could command; but, dreading, lest the softness of his aspect, co-operating with the tenderness of his voice, whilst (as he put her into the carriage)

carriage) he inquired after her health, should shake her resolution, and render her unable to perform with firmness, what not even the fascinating power of love could persuade her was unnecessary; she forced herself to avert her eyes, in order to escape the dangerous magic of physiognomy.

The meeting on the part of Lady Davenhill was as Lady Melmoth had foretold; — friendly, kind, good-humoured. She repeatedly assured her fair cousin, that she should take pleasure in contributing to her establishment in life; and assured her, that when she went to town, she would introduce her to the rest of her relations; who, she doubted not, would be as happy as herself to receive and protect so amiable a part of their family.

“Yes, yes,” continued she, “we must all do something towards providing for her. A sweet girl, indeed! an elegant figure,

figure, and delicate countenance!—
Yes, I remember your father extremely well, my dear; tho' it is now above twenty years since I saw him. I think you greatly resemble him, only he had an aquiline nose—the nose of the Mordaunt family. I suppose you took that Grecian turn of features from your mother. Pray, was she handsome?—
Yes, I dare say;—though, as I told you before (I believe) I never saw her in my life; nor your father, except once with Lord Davenhill, before I was married:—it was at the time my Lord paid his addresses to me. I remember I spoke of him afterwards as a very elegant and remarkably pleasing young man; and I have an idea, his lordship was a little jealous of my admiration of him; (though, I declare, without the least reason, for I only admired him as a friend of his)—however that was—perhaps it might be jealousy—I don't know—

know—however it was, he never again brought him to see me; and soon after our marriage, Mr. Mordaunt offended his family, by marrying a lady they did not approve of; and Lord Davenhill, among the rest, thought proper to discontinue all intercourse with him. However, I don't doubt she was a very worthy and amiable woman, (for I have no prejudices respecting birth) from her education of her daughter; tho', without doubt, it was extremely imprudent, and very unworthy Mr. Mordaunt's great good sense, to marry beneath his family, and disoblige them all. I dare say, you won't do so, my love—no, I dare say you will not;—for, though you have no fortune, you may match extremely well, springing from so ancient and honourable a house, and possessing that beautiful person."—Here her ladyship paused to take breath; but Maria could
make

make no answer. The mention of her parents had swelled her heart with renewed grief for their loss, and brought tears to her eyes.

Lady Melmoth replied to her ladyship, "that the delicacy of Miss Mordaunt's sentiments, and the graceful circumspection of her conduct, left her without a doubt, that her actions would always reflect honour upon the house to which she was allied."

"Oh, I don't doubt it in the least," returned Lady Davenhill; "I am sure your ladyship's good opinion would be a sufficient recommendation of any person to me; much more a relation of my Lord's. For, as I was observing the other day to Lady Alford, speaking of your ladyship's penetration, that you seemed to take in every thing at one glance---But come, my dear child; I am afraid I have lowered your spirits by talking of your parents; but do not
despair

despair of finding protectors in your surviving relatives, that will have your interest at heart. I am sure I can answer for one, at least :”—and so saying, she affectionately kissed her cheek.

Maria, affected by the kindness of this last sentence, returned her ladyship's salute with a feeling of grateful tenderness, that seemed highly to gratify the kind heart of Lady Davenhill. And, when Lady Melmoth rose to take her leave, she insisted that Maria should spend the remainder of that day, and the ensuing night, at Davenhill Park. Lady Melmoth said, she could not think of parting with her guest even to Lady Davenhill, without a promise that they would both spend the next day with her :—this invitation was accepted; and her ladyship returned home, full of the most pleasing reflections on the success of her benevolent visit. One alloy, notwithstanding, she

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felt

felt to her content, from recollecting the disappointment her brother would feel, on her returning without her fair friend :—but, comforting herself with the thought, that this temporary disappointment would be a source of future satisfaction, she recounted to him and to Miss Hampden, with much delight, the occurrence of the morning ; well assured, she was communicating equal pleasure to them by the intelligence.

C H A P. XVI.

WHEN Lady Melmoth was gone, Lady Davenhill perceiving our gentle heroine look pensive and melancholy, with the hope of amusing her, carried her to view the house; and, taking her into a gallery which contained the family pictures, gave her little historical accounts of the most remarkable personages, whose portraits were deposited there. But Maria was incapable of receiving pleasure from that, which at another time would have afforded her the most pleasing sensations. Engrossed by far different thoughts than tracing the actions of her ancestors, she sometimes suffered her attention

tion to relax, whilst they were recounted to her, infomuch that Lady Davenhill could not but perceive it; and it is a doubt whether she would not have been seriously disgusted at her seeming want of respect for her illustrious relatives, (which, notwithstanding the liberality of sentiment with respect to birth she had professed, she begun to fear proceeded from the disproportionate alliance of her parents) had not an incident, which quickly occurred, interested her pity and good-nature, and unfolded to her another cause for the apparent neglect.

Maria, after standing some minutes looking at a picture that recalled to her mind the features of her father, burst into tears — which, her ladyship perceiving, inquired what occasioned her emotion.

“ Alas! Madam,” exclaimed Maria, “ that portrait brought my fa-

ther's countenance and form so strongly to my remembrance, and renewed my grief for the loss of one of the tenderest parents and wisest counsellors that ever daughter possessed, with a force, that not even my present happiness in your ladyship's society could restrain."

"My good child," returned her ladyship, "I love your filial reverence and affection. Be comforted;—I hope you will find many kind relations. For my own part, though I have not, nor pretend to, the wisdom of your parent, I have a heart that is interested in your welfare; and you may at all times command my advice and assistance to the extent of my power and abilities."

Maria, soothed by these kind expressions, wished to accept the offered counsel; and to ease, in some degree, her heart, by revealing to her new-found friend its distresses.

"Believe

“ Believe me, Madam,” she replied,
 “ I have the most lively sense of your
 kindness :—and your advice, whenever
 you shall be pleased to honour me with it,
 will always be received with the highest
 gratitude. But never, I think—never,
 in any part of my future life—can I
 stand so much in need of the advice
 of a judicious, kind, and protecting
 friend, as at this moment.”

“ At this moment, my dear child !”
 reiterated Lady Davenhill, surprized
 by the energy with which she spoke ;
 “ what can at this moment so greatly
 agitate your spirits ?—Consider me as
 your friend and relation, and be not
 afraid to trust me.”

Thus kindly interrogated, Maria re-
 counted to her every thing that had oc-
 curred to her since the decease of her
 parents ; describing to her the incidents
 that had arisen to give Aubrey oppor-

tunities of revealing to her the passion with which she had inspired him ; and the peculiar situations which had discovered to him, that she did not perceive it with indifference. Whilst Maria related to Lady Davenhill her last conversation with Aubrey, the eyes of the latter spoke the highest pleasure, at the prospect of an alliance so honourable and pleasing in every respect.

“ Yes, yes,” exclaimed she hastily, without waiting for the subsequent particulars Maria had to communicate ; “ yes, circumstanced as you were, I think you acted rightly.—I am of opinion you could not well avoid giving him some sort of promise you meant to accept his offer ; for you had at that time apparently no one whose advice you were at all obliged to abide by ; and even had you been protected by your family, you could have had no fear that any part of it would have objected

jected to so advantageous a matrimonial establishment;—yes, yes, as things were, 'twas all very well.—Well, my love, go on if you please.”

Maria continued her narrative, but her feelings during the melancholy recital frequently obliged her to suspend her discourse for many minutes.

Lady Davenhill said every thing she conceived likely to console or comfort her, though greatly mortified herself by the disappointment the cruel incidents she related occasioned her.

When Maria had, at length, disburthened her heart of the sad and weighty particulars, her ladyship replied, with an aspect of much concern—“ I don't know any young man of fashion of the present age, whose character I had, till now, a greater respect for than Mr. Aubrey's; nor any one to whom I should have been happier to have seen a relation of mine united.

His situation has long been a pitiable one, in my estimation, notwithstanding I have been told the follies of his early youth were the occasion of it. There is no one can make greater allowances for the follies of inexperience than myself; but a deliberate act of perfidy is never to be excused or palliated.—No, my good child, you must never think of him again;—for even supposing he had violated no promises to another, I could not bear the idea of seeing you married to a man who kept a mistress; inevitable misery must, in such a case, be your portion; therefore, my dear child, summon all your resolution, and let not this disappointment sink your spirits;—think of him as unworthy your regard, and banish him from your memory.”

“Lady Davenhill,” thought Maria, “speaks wisely, prudently, good-naturedly; but she speaks not with the
air

air and expressions of one who can conceive what a heart formed for love must suffer in renouncing the object it adored."

But, with due deference to the soliloquy of our fair heroine, her ladyship was perhaps one of the best advisers she could have consulted on the occasion; far preferable to one who would have more feelingly sympathized. For the fear lest she should be supposed to indulge a poignant and fruitless regret, which she knew her ladyship would deem the extremity of weakness and folly, if not of guilt, made Maria earnestly endeavour to *reply* with spirit and resolution; and, in striving for the appearance of these, at the moment, she actually roused the feelings she wished to display.

"Trust me, Madam," said she, "I need no monitor to tell me that I ought to give up the idea of an union with

Mr. Aubrey. I only want to be taught how I may best effect my firm purpose."

"Yes, I see you are a good girl," said her ladyship hastily, and pleased with the manner in which she spoke; "and there can be no difficulty, my love, in breaking off a connection of this sort, with pleas so strong to justify your conduct.—I myself will speak my opinion on the subject to Mr. Aubrey, if you chuse it."

"Pardon me, but your ladyship forgets," said Maria, "that I have promised not to communicate to him the *cause* of my refusal;—alas! it is that consideration which occasions my present perplexity and distress."

"True, true," returned Lady Davenhill, "that is true; but it had slipped my memory.—I have a thought (continued her ladyship, after a pause) how to adjust this matter for the present,

sent. I am under the necessity of going to town, upon urgent business, within a week from this time; I will set out a day or two hence, and take you with me; by this means you will be removed from the sight of an object that must now be very unpleasant. If Mr. Aubrey urges you to let him visit or write to you at my house, you may refuse both, by saying you do not chuse I should be made acquainted with his sentiments respecting you, till the time arrives when he may, without offending propriety, avow his wishes, and make known his intentions to your family. This interim will afford time for us to form an excuse for your totally rejecting his proposals."

This plan was by no means satisfactory to Maria. She hated the idea of a temporising act of duplicity, though innocently designed; and would have experienced far less perturbation, had

K 6 a scheme

a scheme been thought of for her immediately putting an end to his hopes. But as she could suggest nothing that had a more plausible appearance, she was constrained to acquiesce in her ladyship's proposal.

"I am truly grateful to your ladyship for the patience and kindness with which you listen to my difficulties," she replied, "and the earnestness with which you strive to find a way to extricate me from them. Indeed, Madam, the plan you have proposed seems to me the only one I can adopt; and I submit myself entirely to your conduct and direction in the affair."

"I am obliged to you, my dear, for the confidence you repose in me; and to-morrow, then, we will make known to Lady Melmoth our design of going to town."

Lady Davenhill now (thinking to relieve the spirits of our amiable heroine)
turned

turned the conversation upon topics very remote from the business of this history. And we therefore deem the present a favourable opportunity to put a period to this chapter.

C H A P. XVII.

WHEN Lady Davenhill's carriage drove into the court-yard of Dunlough Castle the next day, Aubrey, who had stood at one of the windows almost the whole morning, waiting their arrival, ran eagerly to the coach door. As he took Maria's hand, the expression of delight that illumined his eyes, increased the anguish of her heart; and an icy chillness seemed to creep through her veins, as he led her into the room where Lady Melmoth waited to receive them. Maria seated herself in the corner of a sofa on which Miss Hampden sat, and began to enter into conversation with her. Aubrey took a chair, and placed himself

himself beside them. Their first compliments over, Lady Davenhill said, with a smile of infinite good-humour,—“ I must again thank your ladyship for introducing my little cousin to me ; indeed I am so much pleased with her company, that, being obliged to go to town in a few days, upon business of consequence, I have requested her to go with me : and she has kindly promised to make the sacrifice of leaving your ladyship’s society, to gratify my wishes. A sacrifice for which I am, and know I ought to be, extremely grateful ; as I am fully sensible of the pleasure she gives up, to show her respectful attention to my desire.”

“ Your ladyship is flatteringly polite,” said Lady Melmoth, bowing ; “ but, I beg leave to assure you, I shall always experience a high degree of pleasure, in the reflection of having been the instrument of introducing two ladies

ladies of so much real worth to each other. And, though I shall feel the most sincere regret in parting with Miss Mordaunt, before the time she had obligingly promised to spend with me is expired; yet it will be a consoling pleasure to me to think, that she is cementing a family union, which, I have no doubt, will be productive of lasting satisfaction."

"And are we indeed to lose you so soon as within two or three days, my dear Miss Mordaunt!" exclaimed Miss Hampden. "Do me the justice to believe, that I shall feelingly lament the separation; and that my mind will frequently recur, with friendly anticipation, to our meeting in town in the winter."

During the conversation respecting her journey, Maria kept her eyes constantly fixed on one or other of the ladies, in order to avoid those of Aubrey, who

who looked sedulously on her face the whole time.

“You are very kind,” said Maria, answering to Miss Hampden’s expressions of concern at the thought of her departure;—“you are very kind. I shall return with Lady Davenhill this evening to Davenhill Park, as her ladyship means to set out the day after to-morrow; but trust me, my dear Miss Hampden, that my feelings of regret will live till we meet again.”

Aubrey, who from the moment Lady Davenhill first mentioned her intention of taking Maria to town, had been so wholly absorbed by emotions of surprise and disappointment, that he had not even had recollection or command of himself sufficient to pay the common compliments usual on such occasions—now putting his hand on hers, as it lay on the arm of the sofa, said, with a look of interrogation,—“Are
you

you indeed absolutely determined to go?"

"Most assuredly I shall not disappoint Lady Davenhill."

"Can you then feel for no one's disappointment but Lady Davenhill's?" returned he, with a look of resentment and mortification;—"but why should I expect miracles wrought in my favour;—caprice governs the world."

Here he rose from his chair.—

"Surely," said Maria, "I have done nothing to deserve that sarcasm, Mr. Aubrey.—I really do not understand you."

"Done nothing!" reiterated Aubrey, in an agitated, but under tone of voice;—"the only thing in the world that could make me most miserable! Are not you tearing yourself from my sight in the most abrupt and cruel manner? Good God! how can you have the

the heart to wear a face of such cool distracting indifference?"

Maria, who feared, though they sat at a distant part of the room, that their conversation should be overheard, to put a stop to it, was now moving away from him.

"No! do not stir!" said he; I will leave the room immediately. I feel this is no place for me at present.—Unkind, unfeeling Maria!"

So saying, he abruptly departed, leaving her a prey to the most painful emotions. She strove, however, to repel her grief for the distress she was necessitated to inflict, by opposing the cause she had to blame his conduct;—but the former was the sensation that kept strongest possession of her breast, notwithstanding she determined to act as if the latter despotically ruled it.

Soon after Aubrey had quitted the
room,

room, Lady Davenhill said, addressing herself to Lady Melmoth—

“ I promise myself great pleasure, when I go to town, in being introduced to Dr. Edgeware and his sister. The amiable and striking light in which Miss Mordaunt has placed the character of the former, has interested me extremely. Indeed he seems to be a favourite hero of Maria’s ; I protest, if he was thirty years younger, I don’t know whether I should not suspect she was absolutely in love with him.—But *apropos* ! now I am talking of going to town, had you not better, my dear, give directions before dinner about having your cloaths packed up, as you are to go back with me in the evening.”

Some affectionate compliments now passed between Maria and Lady Melmoth, respecting the precipitate departure of the former ; after which, our fair heroine gladly obeyed the suggestion

gestion of Lady Davenhill, and retired to make the necessary preparations for her journey.

C H A P. XVIII.

ON quitting the drawing-room, Maria recollected she had left her work-bag in the breakfast parlour, and went down stairs to seek it. On opening the door, she was greatly disconcerted to perceive Aubrey there; and would have retired when she had found what she went to look for, had he not, with the most impassioned intreaties, begged her to stay a few moments.

“Have

"Have you yet," cried he, "repented of your unjustifiable cruelty in leaving me? Ah, Maria, how could I have expected this conduct from you!"

"Surely," replied Maria, "you cannot call my obedience to the desire of Lady Davenhill unjustifiable!—Oh, Mr. Aubrey, a moment's reflection ought to reconcile you to this separation, by convincing you of its propriety on many accounts."

"May I write to you?"

"By no means, at present."

"Good God! what is your motive for all this severity? You certainly regard me with the most perfect indifference, or you could not thus unreasonably refuse every request I make.—Why do you treat me so unkindly?"

Maria knew not at first how to reply:—the confusion into which this embarrassing and so much dreaded interview had thrown her, prevented her

from recollecting, for some moments, the deception Lady Davenhill had instructed her to practise;—but at last she replied;

“ If any accident should lead Lady Davenhill to suspect that I receive letters from you, she would think it strange that I should hold a correspondence with you which I thought necessary to conceal from her; and I would not willingly do you so great an injury in her estimation, as to tell her you had already avowed a partiality for me. You have too much penetration, I am sure, not to have perceived enough of her Ladyship’s turn of mind, to make you fear she would prove no favourable confidant.”

“ I think,” replied Aubrey, “ that Lady Davenhill has not a soul formed to enter into the poignant emotions of a heart affected with a violent passion. But can there be a woman, my dearest
Maria!

Maria ! endowed with so little of her sex's softness as to hear, without some degree of compassion (though she might blame) the imprudencies of an attachment ardent as mine, operating upon a being so distressingly situated ? Must new friends ever supplant former ones ? Oh ! why, Maria, this earnest desire to quit the society of those whose affections time and knowledge of your merits have rendered more firmly yours ?”

“ Can you think it unnatural—can you wonder, Mr. Aubrey,” replied she, “ that an hapless orphan like myself, whose life has been marked by distresses so affectingly peculiar, should rejoice at the prospect of being received into the protecting bosom of her family ?

Here she would have departed ; but Aubrey, touched by the pathetic manner in which she alluded to her sorrows, now lamented that he had spoken with
so

so much petulance; and endeavoured by every soothing art to prevail upon her to stay. Maria listened, till tenderness had almost effaced from her softened mind all traces of his faults; but on his uttering the words—“*I am sensible I have no pretensions to your preference, but those which a heart incapable of change gives to its possessor*”—the keenness with which memory brought to her imagination his infidelity to the fair mourner she had so lately seen, renewed the painful impression in its full force; and, disregarding his intreaties to the contrary, she disengaged herself from him, and taking up the work-bag which had unluckily been the occasion of her visiting the parlour, hastily left the room, mentally exclaiming (with a sigh of anguish) from Milton :

“That such resemblance of truth and virtue
 “Should yet remain, where faith and real’ty
 “Are not!”——

C H A P. XIX.

AS Maria went up the stair-case, she heard the sound of a carriage, and the bell at the gate of the castle ring ; and rejoicing that she had escaped seeing visitors, hastened to her own apartment, where, plunged in a deep reverie on her unfortunate situation, she remained for above an hour, totally unmindful of the occasion for which she had quitted the drawing-room.

She was thus sitting when somebody rapped at her door ; Maria, wiping hastily some tears from her eyes, rose and opened it. It was Miss Hampden, who entered, eagerly exclaiming, “ Do I interrupt you ?—Can you let me in ?
—I have

—I have much that I wish to tell you.”

“ You do not interrupt me indeed—pray come in, my dear Miss Hampden.—You have been weeping, I perceive by your eyes;—you appear extremely agitated; and yet, if I may judge from your countenance, not painfully so:—I assure you, I am greatly interested.”

“ You judge rightly, I *have* been shedding tears; but they were those of sweet and tender reconciliation.—But suffer me to sit down and recover myself a little,” said she, flinging herself into a chair, “ for at present I am almost inclined to doubt the evidence of my senses—I will tell you all in a few minutes.”

Losing, at the instant, her own concerns in those of her friend, Maria seated herself beside Miss Hampden; and, affectionately pressing one of her hands,

L 2

with

with tender anxiety waited for her communication.

“ Oh ! I have had, my dear Miss Mordaunt, so unlooked for, but so welcome a visiter !” cried she—“ Mrs. Herbert is in the house !—Kind ! affectionate ! friendly ! as I formerly knew her.—Oh, you cannot conceive the joy that has entered my heart within this half hour !—but I must tell you the particulars minutely.”

“ I shall be rejoiced to share in your happiness,” said Maria, perceiving her greatly agitated ; “ but let me beg you to spare your recital, for your own sake, till your spirits are more collected.”

“ I shall be composed in a few minutes,” returned Miss Hampden, bursting into tears ; and, after having thus given ease to her heart, she related to our fair heroine as follows :

“ When Mrs. Herbert’s name was announced, you may imagine the agitation
tion

tion into which I was thrown. I hastened down stairs, my heart beating with a quick succession of mixed emotions. The moment I entered the room, Mrs. Herbert, with looks of tender complacency, stepped forward, and opened her arms to receive me. Rejoiced *thus* to meet my benefactress, without waiting to have the cause of the alteration explained, I flew towards her, and, eagerly clasping her neck, all the little hoard of resentment I had in her absence treasured up, melted away through my eyes. Mrs. Herbert seemed no less affected; and we spent some minutes in a silent intercourse of tears and embraces. — Mrs. Herbert first broke silence.

“ Oh ! my dear Emilia,” cried she, “ can you forgive the asperity with which I have treated you ? — Can you forget my hard, unkind neglect ? ”

L 3

“ Mention

“Mention it no more, my dearest Madam !” I returned ; “ to meet you thus affectionately kind, convinces me that you have discovered the mistaken opinion you had formed of my conduct ; and repays me for all the sorrows I have experienced !”

“ Oh Emilia !” cried Mrs. Herbert, “ greatly indeed have you been wronged ! greatly indeed has your generous spirit been traduced ! But I will tell you all—I owe you that explanation, that you may not think my behaviour altogether without apology ; though I confess I ought to have known you better than to have believed you capable of so suddenly deviating from your natural habits of ingenuousness and sincerity. The peculiar situation of my mind at that period, is all that can in the smallest degree plead my excuse. You know the confidence I
have

have for many years reposed in my favourite woman, *Wilford*; you know I had the strongest reliance on her steady regard to her word, and the strict integrity of her actions; and will therefore the less wonder I should give ear to her, when she artfully suggested to me that you encouraged the addresses of Lord Henry, when she assured me she had seen letters privately delivered to you from him; and that she had overheard you, in a conversation with my nephew in the garden, ridicule my growing approbation of Colonel Herbert; to this information *Wilford* added many aggravating particulars. You, Emilia, who so well know the warmth of my temper, will not wonder it took fire at these suggestions. I kept the flame, however, concealed in my own breast for some days, determined not to come to an open dissension till I had *myself* made further dis-

coveries ; and the seeing a letter delivered to you in so suspicious a manner, confirmed in my mind, beyond a doubt, the intelligence *Wilford* had infused into it. 'Twas this which actuated my resentment towards you, the morning you received that letter ; which has occasioned you so many troubles, and me so much regret. Nor till a very short time ago did I discover how greatly I had been imposed upon, and my dear Emilia injured.

Some months after the death of Colonel Herbert, *Wilford* happened to fall sick, and was for some days confined to her bed with a delirious fever, which so weakened her nerves that, after she was out of danger, her spirits were frequently sunk and depressed to an extreme degree. In these fits of *nervous* horrors I believe all the ill she had done in her life used to occur, in the most glaring colours, to her perturbed

turbed imagination. Under the influence of those terrors, she came to me and confessed, with much self-reproach and many tears, that she had taken a bribe from Colonel Herbert (who was fearful you would be a bar to his marrying me) to hint to me that you encouraged the addresses of Lord Henry; and that she had overheard you, in a conversation with his Lordship in the garden, say you were sure I should accept Colonel Herbert's offer; and ridicule, with infinite mirth, the violence of my grief for the loss of Mr. G—."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Maria, "how severely must it wound the feelings of your friend, to make so humiliating a confession of the conduct of her late husband!"

"I don't know," returned Miss Hampden, "I don't know; but I am inclined to think, her strong opinion

that the violence of his affection for her prompted him to act for *once* against the generosity of his *nature*, prevented her from feeling any poignant mortification in making the communication. —But to proceed.

“Nothing,” continued Mrs. Herbert, “but the weak and emaciated state in which I saw this miserable woman could have restrained me from giving way to the impetuosity of my feelings on the occasion. I commanded her instantly to leave my presence, determined to dismiss her from my house. The moment she had left me, I sat down in a state of mind you may conceive, though I want words to describe it, and wrote immediately to your father, inclosing a letter to you. I waited with extreme impatience the return of the post, which brought me an account from Mr. Hampden, that you had left him some time, and were
settled

settled with Lady M——, to whose country seat (where you then were) he had sent my letter. After waiting a fortnight without receiving an answer, (so ardently did I wish a reconciliation; so earnestly did I long to convince you of the imposition which had been practised upon me) I resolved to visit you in person, as I thought I had not expressed myself with sufficient force in writing.—But this journey was retarded awhile by the arrival of a letter from the Duchess of C——, requesting me to spend the ensuing month in ——shire; adding, as an inducement, that she expected her son Henry to return from abroad in the course of the month. This piece of information, some time before, would have prevented me from going; for I knew the dislike my nephew had taken to me on your account; but it had now a quite contrary effect, as I had

determined not to contradict, but rather abet his sentiments respecting you, if they continued the same as when he left England. And this, my dear Emilia, I speedily found to be the case, by the coldness, and even disgust, with which he looked upon me when I first saw him. He solicitously sought an opportunity of speaking to me when I was alone ; and, having found it, with a spirit that charmed me, eagerly demanded—" Where, Madam, has your unkindness driven your much injured, your faithful, but too generous friend ?"—Pleased with the generous openness of his heart and manners, I made haste to inform him how greatly I had been misled, and how earnestly I wished to make you every reparation in my power :—I told him where you were, and offered to let him accompany me in my visit to you. He seemed enchanted with pleasure ; affectionately embraced

embraced me, and expressed in the most ardent terms his gratitude for my overture. He assured me he left England with a full determination, when he became of age, to *renew* the proposals he had made to you; that he still adhered to the resolution; and, if you accepted the offer of his hand, willing to share the little he was master of, independent of his father, he would joyfully, for your sake, risk all his expectations from paternal bounty.

I invited him to spend a few weeks with me in Wales; and, as soon as the time I had proposed to spend with them was expired, with permission of the Duke and Duchess, he left —shire with me; but instead of travelling into Wales, we journied immediately to this place. Lord Henry is now waiting at an inn in the town for the permission to visit you; and if my dear Emilia thinks as rightly of my nephew

as his tried constancy and merits deserve, she should, and I am of opinion she will, commission one of my servants to invite him hither. What say you, my dear girl?"

"Judge, my dear Miss Mordaunt, how soothing, how consolatory to my wounded heart, was the information she gave me of Lord Henry's spirited conduct! Think with what lively and tender gratitude, the friendly warmth with which my benefactress had acted, inspired me! This sudden and unexpected turn in my affairs, had nearly overcome my spirits, till my tears, which fell plentifully on her neck, relieved them.—"Oh, my dearest Madam!" I exclaimed;—"if *you* approve, if *you* recommend, can *I* object? Ah! it was what I thought would be your *desire*, your *will*, I followed at the time I *rejected* what you now encourage me to *accept*." Mrs. Herbert answered,

swered, by again affectionately pressing me in her arms ; and after having given vent to the tender sensations which rose to her heart, she rang the bell, and dispatched a message to Lord Henry. I now begged she would permit me to introduce her to my honoured friend, Lady Melmoth ; and, going into another apartment, I sent to request the favour of speaking with her ladyship ; she hastened to me immediately, and I succinctly related to her every thing that had happened. I need not describe to you how sincerely she rejoiced with me ;—she desired me instantly to lead her to my friend ; to whom, with her natural politeness, she gave a most hospitable and elegant welcome to her house, and they entered into a conversation which lasted till Lord Henry was announced ; when Lady Melmoth, after paying her compliments to his Lordship, withdrew.

The

The moment she had quitted the room, Lord Henry exclaimed, with the most impassioned utterance, turning to Mrs. Herbert, "Oh, Madam, let me intreat you to inform me at once what I have to hope? Will my adored Miss Hampden now condescend to accept my hand, now that my offer is seconded by your solicitation? Is she still inexorable? or has my never-ceasing attachment wrought any sensibility in my favour?"

To this (after the conversation I had with Mrs. Herbert) I did not hesitate to reply,—“The reserve, my Lord, I formerly imposed upon myself, I now disclaim. You are arrived at an age, when your own inclinations, if founded on virtue, have a right to supersede parental authority. I have no friend but what would rejoice in my acceptance of your generous offer. My earliest friend, my kind benefactress, even
solicits

solicits me to accept it. Thus sanctioned, let me frankly confess,—I feel the most lively sensibility to your lordship's merits; and, if it is in my power to contribute to your happiness, it will ever be my pleasure, my pride, and my glory to do so."

Lord Henry, with tears of rapture, thanked me for this confession with the warmest encomiums. My tears flowed fast;—the scene became too affecting. I begged they would suffer me to retire to recover myself; and I have used the opportunity I with difficulty obtained, to fly to my dear Miss Mordaunt, whose feeling heart, I knew, would take as lively an interest in my joys, as it had before done in my sorrows.

Though the spirits of Maria were sunk to sadness by her own affliction, her heart yet took a lively joy in the
happiness

happiness of her friend ; and she warmly expressed her feelings on the occasion.

Maria, after busying herself in the little avocations which she had left the company of Lady Melmoth and Lady Davenhill to perform, went down stairs with Miss Hampden, who, in the most friendly manner, introduced her to Mrs. Herbert and Lord Henry. And they soon after joined Lady Melmoth and Lady Davenhill in the drawing-room.

Maria contrived the whole day to give Aubrey no opportunity of speaking to her alone ; but in the evening, as he handed her to Lady Davenhill's carriage, he exclaimed in a low voice,—" Oh, Maria ! if new connections had not altered your sentiments, or at least estranged your affections, you could not see me thus unhappy, without feeling a part of my uneasiness."

Our

Our fair heroine made some inarticulate answer—bowed—and, drawing back her head to conceal her emotion, was driven away.

C H A P. XX.

THE day after they arrived in town, Lady Davenhill and Maria visited Dr. Edgeware. The Doctor had been previously informed, by letter, of the change in her affairs; so that nothing new remained to be told.

“I feel myself under great obligations to you, Doctor,” said Lady Davenhill, “for your kindness to my little

tle friend; and was impatient for the honour of being known to a character so distinguished for worth and talents."

The Doctor bowed to her ladyship; and Maria began to express her gratitude for the friendship and protection he had shewn towards her; but he interrupted her by saying,—

"These thanks, good child, are unnecessary.—I have been of some service to you. When you had no home, you were welcome to mine. Should that ever chance to be the case again, you shall be equally welcome; at present I am pleased to lose you."

Mrs. Tonto now came in; and having paid her compliments to Lady Davenhill, congratulated Maria on her having been introduced to her ladyship.

"How exquisitely I should have enjoyed your first interview," cried she; it must have been a most sentimental scene!

scene! But happy was it for me, perhaps, that I did not; I fear I should have been too intensely affected; and might have felt the effects of it upon my nerves for many weeks. Oh, surely the sufferings of people of feeling are not to be imagined but by the *feeling*!

“Now you speak of feeling, Madam,” cried Lady Davenhill, “it reminds me that I have a box to-morrow night for the tragedy of the Distressed Mother. If you are not otherwise engaged, will you and Dr. Edgeware do us the honour of going with us?”

The Doctor and Mrs. Tonto assented; and at the appointed time Lady Davenhill called upon them. Mrs. Tonto had scarcely stepped into the coach, when she put her hand into her pocket, and suddenly exclaimed,—
 “What a bad memory I have! I beg your ladyship’s pardon, but I must trouble

trouble you to wait a minute or two"—
(then calling to her maid, who stood in
the hall) "Jenny, go and fetch me
another pocket handkerchief. You
can have no idea, ladies, how much I
was distressed the last time I went to
see the —— perform, for want of a
third handkerchief; I wetted one to
that degree with my tears, that I am
positive water might have been squeez-
ed out of it; and the other was so ex-
tremely damp, that I caught a sore
throat by throwing it round my neck
as I went out of the house. Perhaps I
may have no occasion to use a *third*
handkerchief to-night. I don't know
how it may be, but I think it best to
prepare. It is most probable, how-
ever, I shall not weep so much, though
the tragedy we are going to see is ex-
tremely affecting; but, I know not how
it is, no actress has so extraordinary a
power over me as the ——; for, if

you will believe me, I have such a sympathy for what she is going to say, that the moment I spy the corner of her black petticoat, I always burst into a flood of tears."

"A very extraordinary effect, indeed, Madam," said Lady Davenhill, archly smiling at Maria; who, sick of the *sentimental* jargon she had just heard, and to prevent Mrs. Tonto from engrossing the conversation, asked Dr. Edgeware if he thought the character of Andromache would be ably performed?

"The noble simplicity," returned he, "of Miss Younge's figure and deportment, the varied expression of her countenance, and the unlimited and enchanting powers of her voice and action, place it beyond a doubt, that she will be an admirable, an inimitable representative of the wife of Hector. With a conception of character the most clear

clear and comprehensive, this excellent actress possesses an enthusiasm so strong and elevated, that from her first entrance to her final exit, she never for one moment loses sight of the character she has assumed. Unpractised by her is that paltry art, (which always bespeaks a mediocrity of talents) of purposely appearing cold, languid, and uninterested through inferior scenes, in order to heighten the effect of exertion in those which are called *principal*. The feelings of Miss Younge are too genuine, and her imagination too vivid, to need such aids; hence, even the most minute parts of her truly classical performances, have a proportionate degree of excellence, and unite to form a *sublime* and *beauteous whole*.

“She is indeed a charming performer,” said Lady Davenhill.

“Oh, I don’t doubt,” said Mrs. Tonto, whining,—“Oh, I don’t doubt

but I shall be extremely affected: — I tremble for my poor nerves; for my exquisite feelings operate but too powerfully upon them.”

Maria found all that the Doctor had said realized.—An air of sadness, mixed with a soft and majestic dignity, marked the entrance of the heroine so forcibly, that Maria spontaneously repeated with the tone of admiration—

“ Not known a Queen by *Guards behind.*”

When, in answer to the speech of Pyrrhus—

—————“ Inspired by you,
“ What would I not achieve? Again shall
Troy
“ Rise from its ashes: This right arm shall
fix
“ Her seat of Empire; and your son shall
reign—”

Andromache replies—

“ Such dreams of greatness suit not my
condition;
“ His hopes of Empire perished with his
FATHER.—”

Miss Younge's look, her action, the hopeless solemnity of her voice, sunk every heart with kindred grief:—her animated change of voice, countenance, and gesture, when she proceeded to apostrophise her native * country, mingling with an ardent but melancholy enthusiasm, the fond triumph of a heart exulting in the glory of the object of its softer affections—all displayed the most consummate knowledge of the operations of a mind exalted and tender in the extreme.

The melting touches of maternal tenderness, in her requesting the intercession of Hermione, and her expostulations with Pyrrhus in the third act, were beautifully described.—But the

- “ No, thou imperial city, ancient Troy !
- “ Thou pride of Asia, founded by the Gods ;
- “ Never, oh never ! must we hope to see
- “ Those bulwarks rise, which *Hector* could
- not guard.”

bro-

broken, half-suffocated tone of her voice, whilst she pronounced—

“ ———— Oh, Sir, excuse
 “ The pride of royal blood, that checks my
 “ speech—”

proclaimed the struggles of a high soul oppressed, and bursting with the sublimity of its own sentiments.

But when Pyrrhus again menaces the life of Aftyanax, and all hope seems lost (unless she yields to concessions which her exalted spirit disdains) the heroic resignation to fate with which she uttered—

“ Then let me die and let me go to *Heaven*,”
 was never equalled but by herself.

It is certain that Andromache never appeared so proudly great as when she stooped to kneel. In Miss Younge this was not the attitude of humbled dignity;—it was indeed her moment of triumph.—For though her knees

bent to the earth *after* she had pronounced, with the fire of wounded royalty,—

“ See how low you have reduc’d a queen !”

Yet her unsubmitting spirit shone forth with added lustre, in the graceful elevation of her head, neck, and chest. The whole audience felt the awful presence of *majesty*, and beheld Pyrrhus annihilated at the daring grandeur of her keen reproach.

Her gradual transition from the solemn and energetic tone, in which she recapitulated the woes she had endured, to the tremulously pathetic break in her utterance of—

— “ *If he must die* ” —

formed a climax of the sublime, which never was, never can be, excelled by any actress:—for the feelings of an enlightened audience, convulsed with enchanting anguish, confessed it the
unexaggerated,

unexaggerated, the genuine expression of *dignified nature*.

“ Oh, Sir,” cried Maria, addressing the Doctor, “ can there be any of the professors of this lovely art, whose feelings, whose talents exceed those of this accomplished favourite of the tragic muse !”

“ None,” returned he ; “ while she has this manifest superiority over all her competitors, of being equally the object of admiration and delight, whether the roses of Thalia or the cypress of Melpomene bind her polished temples.”

C H A P. XXI.

IN leaving the house, as they were making their way through the crowd, which was extremely great, in the lobby, Maria was painfully disturbed by seeing the lady, whose intelligence respecting Aubrey had occasioned her so much misery, pass by her. The surprize for a minute took away all recollection, and whilst she stood still, her party, unnoticing her inattention, mixed with the crowd; so that when she recovered and looked around, she could discern nothing of them. At this juncture she heard her name pronounced, and saw Aubrey coming towards her; Maria instantly concluded he had attended the lady who

who had just passed her; and it seemed as if some latent hope had till then, unknown to herself, kept possession of her breast, so strong was the sensation of despair which overwhelmed her soul at that moment. The paleness of death shaded her face; her respiration was suspended; and dewy terror hung on her brows.

“For once I am fortunate,” said Aubrey; “how I rejoice to have discovered you at this instant!—Permit me to protect you.—Where are your party?”

“They are gone before,” said Maria coldly, withdrawing from him; “I have lost sight of them.”

“Do not alarm yourself; my carriage waits.—Suffer me to have the honour of conveying you home.”

Maria made no direct answer to his offer; but hastened towards the door on her right hand.—“They went this
M 4 way,”

way," said she, "and I know I shall meet the Doctor returning to seek me."

"How strangely you avoid me!—tell me in what I have offended?" said Aubrey; "I am convinced some vile machinations have been practised against me.—But, oh Maria! surely it is not like yourself to act thus mysteriously!—Why will you not give me an opportunity of explaining away any aspersions that may have injured me in your opinion."

"I require, I need no explanations," returned Maria.

"No! it is that indifference which distracts me.—Could I see you to-morrow?—I have a letter in my possession that might"—

He was interrupted by the approach of Dr. Edgeware, as they were descending the steps.

"I am glad to find my fair charge
so

so well protected," said he, bowing to Aubrey; "the ladies are waiting, much alarmed for your safety, Miss Mor-daunt."

"Till now, I ever rejoiced to meet you, Doctor," said Aubrey; "but at the present moment you come most unfortunately, to deprive me of the happiness of guarding this lady home."

"Let us hasten, Sir, if you please," said Maria, "to relieve the ladies from their anxiety."

She now gave one hand to the Doctor, withdrawing the other from Aubrey, under pretence of holding up her gown, as they walked to Lady Davenhill's carriage.

"I intreat you," said he, "to let me see you to-morrow morning;—I have many important particulars to converse with you upon."

"I go out to-morrow morning," said she, "with Lady Davenhill."

“In the evening then?”

“Lady Davenhill,” returned Maria reservedly, “will have a large party, and I shall have no opportunity of conversing with you on a subject of consequence.”

“For heaven’s sake, tell me when you shall be disengaged!—Oh, I have inquiries of the most momentous nature to make of you!—When may I see you?”

“Indeed I know not,” said Maria; and just then they came up to the carriage, into which, without saying more, she hastily stepped.

Aubrey paid his compliments to Lady Davenhill, and bowing to Dr. Edgeware and Mrs. Tonto, turned from the coach as it drove off.

“Pray, my dear,” said Lady Davenhill, “did you stop to speak to Mr. Aubrey?”

“No,”

“No, Madam; I did not meet him till after I had lost sight of you.”

Her ladyship perceived, by the tone of Maria's voice, that something had happened to disturb her mind; and therefore changed the conversation, till they had set down Dr. Edgeware and Mrs. Tonto at their own house.

When they were alone, she eagerly expressed the curiosity with which the suddenness of Aubrey's appearance in town had inspired her. Maria described the incident of her meeting him, and her previous surprise;—to which her ladyship immediately replied,

“It is plain he perceives you have discovered some particulars which he wished to remain concealed; and I think it might have been better, for some reasons, if you had promised to see him to-morrow morning, as he talked so earnestly of explanations: if he could not have exculpated himself,

you might at least have gained an opportunity of absolutely forbidding his addressee."

"Oh no!" said Maria; "I am determined never to see him more, on any terms but those of an indifferent acquaintance. Circumstances too well convince me he can make no real exculpation; and I will not tempt him to add to his faults, by listening for one moment to deceitful evasions: to-morrow I will fully inform him by letter of my sentiments."

"But will you alledge no cause for your refusal?" said Lady Davenhill; "I think that will be an unprecedented conduct on such an occasion."

"His own heart will tell him the reason," said Maria, "and I shall have preserved my word, which *I* am resolved not to forfeit."

After some farther discourse on this head, in which Maria maintained her

opinion, they arrived at her ladyship's house in Berkley-square.

C H A P. XXII.

MARIA, notwithstanding the shock she had received, kept up her spirits tolerably well till she had retired to her own room; but the force she had put upon herself, whilst in the presence of Lady Davenhill, seemed to have augmented her store of sorrow; for now that she was alone, the conflict of her heart burst forth into sighs and tears of the bitterest anguish.

She sat down and attempted to write to Aubrey; but her head was so distracted, and her ideas so confused, she could not construct a single sentence.

She

She threw away the pen, resolving to defer writing till the morning.

Maria rose not till late the next day, and totally unrefreshed by sleep. She would have put in practice her intention of writing, but Lady Davenhill, seeing her so ill, insisted she should lay it aside at that time, and go with her to pay two or three visits and take an airing.—They went; and her ladyship kept her out till near their usual hour of dining; so that Maria was again obliged to postpone writing her letter till the evening.

But the cloth was scarcely removed, when she received a letter, which she immediately perceived came from Aubrey. She took it hastily from the servant; and, forgetting the conditions she had imposed upon herself, with tremulous impatience was going to break the seal; but recollecting herself, and stopping her hand, she waited till
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the man had left the room, when, dropping it on the table, she exclaimed with emotion—"No, no! I will return it unopened, with the letter I mean to fend him."

"No, my dear child," said Lady Davenhill, "that is surely acting too precipitately;—by all means read the letter;—let us judge no one without hearing his vindication;—yes, I beg you will read it."

"I cannot open it, Madam; indeed I cannot," returned Maria; "I could not bear to see him descend to gloss facts by frivolous evasions.—Oh! the memory of what I once thought him, steals o'er my fancy like the first recollection of a charming vision, that is for ever flown!"

"Nay, nay; but it is inconsistent with your good sense to talk thus, without suffering him to plead his own cause.—I protest, if you will not break

the seal, I shall be tempted to take the liberty of doing so myself; it is but shewing him common justice to hear his defence."

"If it must be read, Madam," said Maria, "do *you* be kind enough to read it; for indeed *I* cannot."

Lady Davenhill now took the letter, and read as follows :

"My dear Maria,

"In how false, how injurious a light have I appeared to you!—This day has unravelled to me a plot of so vile and so intricate a nature, that I am incapable, in my present state of mind, of describing it to you by letter. Permit me, if it is practicable, to have the honour of waiting upon you this evening.—Oh, see me! my adored Maria, if it be possible!—believe me, I have evidences the most satisfactory and conclusive, of the total falsity of what has been alledged against me.

"If

“ If you have lost all confidence in me, it will I hope return, when I assure you that Lady Melmoth is acquainted with facts that invalidate the truth of those aspersions, which have lost me your good opinion.—See me, my loved Maria! in the sacred name of truth, I conjure you to see me this evening, if it be possible! or if not, I intreat you will send me word WHEN you will do me the justice to hear me exculpate myself from the calumnies which have been fabricated to ruin me in your estimation.—I wait your answer with torturing impatience, and remain, with the most ardent sincerity,

Your faithfully devoted,

E. AUBREY.”

“ There! fair Statira,” cried her ladyship, as she ended; “ there is a letter for you!—What do you say to it?”

it?—Surely you cannot refuse to write an immediate invitation; especially as the matter is referred to the decision of your friend, Lady Melmoth.”

“There is indeed most assuredly,” said Maria, “an air of ingenuousness runs through the letter, that I know not how to stand against; and yet circumstances conspire so fatally to persuade me of his duplicity, that, were it not for the allusion to Lady Melmoth, I could scarcely suffer myself to admit a doubt of it.”

“It is highly proper an answer should be sent immediately.”

“I know not how to write;—I know not how to see him at this time,” said Maria, “so extremely agitated are my spirits.”

“Perhaps it would be better I did *both* for you,” said her ladyship.

“Oh, it would be most kind,” returned Maria.

“Will

“ Will you leave every thing then to my conduct ? ”

“ Most readily, most thankfully, my dearest Madam.”

Lady Davenhill then called for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote as follows :

S I R,

As I am sensible our family must receive the highest satisfaction from the honour of your addresses to Miss Mor-daunt, were some parts of your conduct towards another lady cleared up ; give me leave to assure you, that I shall sincerely rejoice to hear any information that may tend to that point.— My young friend is at present too much indisposed to receive a visit from you ; and has therefore deputed me to have that honour. I shall be at home the whole evening ; and remain,

S I R,

Your most obedient humble servant,

CATHERINE DAVENHILL;

Berkley Square.

Aubrey

Aubrey obeyed Lady Davenhill's summons ; and, after some preliminary compliments on both sides, he entered into the following particulars :—

On the evening of the second day after your ladyship and Miss Mordaunt left Dunlough Castle, in passing thro' the little gallery to my own chamber, I accidentally perceived, in a corner of the floor, a paper, which, having no superscription, I took the liberty of reading. I found it was a letter, which had been wrapt in a cover ;—the dark and ambiguous terms in which it was couched, gave me an extreme curiosity to know to whom it was addressed. The hand-writing, I was sensible, from the first moment I looked upon it, I had seen before ; and, after some time spent in fruitless endeavours to recollect, I at last believed I had hit upon the writer. This was a Miss Villars, the daughter of a very gallant officer
and

and accomplished gentleman, with whose friendship I was honoured till his death. From the first commencement of my acquaintance with Lieut. Villars, I frequently deplored the unrewarded merit of this brave and excellent man; and, by unwearied importunity to those who had the power of serving him, I at length had the satisfaction of obtaining the promise of a captain's commission for him. But alas! a dangerous illness had attacked my friend, and the hour I called upon him to inform him of the success of my endeavours, was his last. This gentleman left an orphan daughter, young, innocent, beautiful, and accomplished; whose distress of mind and circumstances from this great loss, would have affected with pity any heart. So far from entertaining a wish of seducing the daughter of my friend, (as I find the case has been represented to you)

my

my concern for her unprotected situation induced me to introduce Miss Villars to Lady Melmoth, who visited her in her affliction, and afterwards made her known to the Hon. Mrs. Wilmot, a relation of Sir Robert Melmoth's, who received her into her house as her friend and companion.

“ Here it was Lord Newry, who visited in this family on the most familiar footing, (being the intimate and particular associate of Mr. Wilmot) frequently saw her. Mrs. Wilmot remarked his Lordship's attention to Miss Villars; and knowing his character with respect to women, delicately warned her against his designs, but ineffectually; for, hurried away by a fatal passion, she quitted the protection of Mrs. Wilmot, and eloped with her lover.

“ Acquainted with these circumstances, and recollecting the hand-writing
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ting of the letter in question to be that of Miss Villars, your ladyship will not wonder, I immediately concluded she had written it at the instigation of Lord Newry, to injure me with Miss Mordaunt; and that I looked upon it as a clue that unravelled to me all the peculiarities in Miss Mordaunt's behaviour, that had given me so much uneasiness before she left Dunlough Castle. So full possession did this idea take of my mind, that I slept not the whole night; and rising as soon as the day dawned, I called my servant, and ordered him to prepare immediately for my journey; and, leaving a note for my sister, in which I apologized for my abrupt departure, I set out on my road to London, before the family were stirring. It was eight o'clock when I arrived in town; notwithstanding which, I resolved to make an effort to see Miss Mordaunt that night; and, hastily changing

changing my dress, I ordered myself to be driven to your ladyship's house, hoping to gain an opportunity of speaking to Miss Mordant on the subject, under pretence of having a commission to deliver from Lady Melmoth. When I got to Berkeley Square, I was told your ladyship and Miss Mordaunt were gone to the play. Having inquired to which theatre, I bade them drive me thither. The house was so crowded, that, though I saw your lovely friend the whole time, I could not get near enough to speak to her. The representation over, I was hastening to your side of the house; but before I could get round, you had quitted your box; and I met Miss Mordaunt in the passage, separated from her party. The coldness and reserve of her behaviour, and her absolute refusal to receive my visits, confirmed me in my opinion of what I had suspected; and I went home

home in a state of the most extreme perturbation.

The next morning at breakfast, I recollected, that once, in passing thro' Berner's-street, Lord Newry had shown me the house where Miss Villars lived; to her, therefore, I immediately went. I enquired for Miss Villars; and being informed she was at home, I sent word that a gentleman from Lord Newry wished to speak to her. She admitted me. But never shall I forget her look of consternation when I entered the room. Without speaking, I took the letter from my pocket, and asked if it was not her hand-writing: Concluding that Miss Mordaunt had made me acquainted with her stragem, her confusion became so great, that she had not recollection enough to deny it; and, faltering out a confession, she intreated me, in the most humiliated terms, to forgive the ingrati-

tude she had been guilty of; appealed to my pity for her situation, by telling me she had been prevailed on to become the instrument of his lordship's revenge, by his threats of abandoning her for ever, if she did not. I cannot express to your ladyship what I felt in seeing the daughter of so esteemed a friend in such a situation.

“Towards you, Miss Villars,” said I, “my pity supercedes resentment; but for that mean-souled, unmanly villain——But tell me, Madam—let me know in what manner I have been wronged, that I may know how to attempt my justification.” She related to me the whole transaction, confessing that the picture she had put round the neck of her own little girl, had been obtained by the means of Lady Melmoth's woman, who borrowed it from her ladyship's drawer for the time it was wanted, and afterwards deposited it

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it in the same place, without its removal having been discovered.

“The moment I had gained these particulars, I hastened out of the house. When I got home, I instantly sat down, and wrote my sentiments to Lord Newry; but my letter was brought back unopened, with information, that his lordship had set out for Paris the day before.”

Here Aubrey ended his relation—during which he had been frequently interrupted by Lady Davenhill’s rapid observations on the proceedings he had recited.

“Vilely, indeed, have you been used,” said she; “but I hope you will not attempt to punish the villainy of Lord Newry, by risking your own life.—Do not think of it, for heaven’s sake.”

Aubrey evaded giving a direct reply, by intreating her ladyship to do

him the honour of communicating what he had said to Maria.

“ I will, indeed, literally do you the *honour* to relate what I have heard,” said her ladyship; and bowing, she left him, and went to Maria, who was sitting in her dressing-room, waiting her return with great anxiety.

“ Oh, my dear Madam !” cried Maria, the moment her ladyship entered to her,—“ What intelligence do you bring me ? Am I to think of him as I did before those cruel doubts were infused into my mind ?”

“ Indeed, my good child, you are not to think of him as you did before,” said her ladyship.

“ What a fate is mine !” exclaimed Maria, sinking on the sofa, and covering her face with her hands ;—“ Why, Madam, did you persuade me to open that letter, which has only

roused fallacious hopes, that now double my disappointment and despair !”

“ Disappointment and despair !”—cried her ladyship ; “ what cause is there for such despairing expressions as those ?—what have I said to cause these violent emotions of distress ?”

“ Oh, Madam, have you not said that Aubrey is false, deceitful, perjured, base ?”

“ I utter invectives so terrible against Mr. Aubrey !” cried her ladyship ; “ my good child, what have I said the least approaching to those epithets ?”

“ It is true, Madam, you have not used those epithets ; but you have uttered what has the same import :—Have you not said I must not think of him as I did before so black an aspersions had been thrown on his character ?”

“ Well, my little impatient cousin,” said Lady Davenhill, “ and I still say
you

you must not think of him as *you did* before. You must think still higher of his merit; for, I assure you, I have things to relate, that will enhance it in your estimation."

Lady Davenhill then minutely recounted every circumstance, as it has been stated to the reader.

Maria heard, with tears of delight and admiration, the conduct of Aubrey, respecting Miss Villars, described by her ladyship.

"Oh!" cried Maria, "let me see him immediately, that I may supplicate his forgiveness for having listened to the voice of detraction, when it attacked a character so tender, so delicate, so noble as his."

"Ring the bell, then, my love, and let us send for him."—She did.

A servant came—

"Beg Mr. Aubrey to do me the favour

your to walk into this room," said Lady Davenhill.

Aubrey entered with an air that had in it somewhat of reproach; but at sight of the countenance of Maria, which betrayed her self-reprehension for having wrongfully suspected him, the soft reproof he had prepared was lost in the liveliest sensations of delight. And, fondly gazing on her lovely form, he could only express, in a broken sentence, the pleasure he felt in being introduced to her by Lady Davenhill.

The dread of a rencontre between Aubrey and Lord Newry was speedily removed from the mind of Maria; the public papers, informing her of the cause of the precipitate flight of the latter to the continent. In a paroxysm of brutal rage, he had killed a waiter at a tavern; and, as he could not hope, that in this country his rank and title would command the same lenity it might in the
kingdom

kingdom which had the honour to give him birth, he thought it best to fly from those laws he had so daringly violated.

As no incident occurred after this period to interrupt the harmony which had taken place between Aubrey and Maria, we beg leave to claim the privilege (which historians of our class have for time immemorial preserved) of ending our work, with informing the reader, that our hero and heroine were MARRIED, after all due respect had been paid to propriety, and decorum.

F I N I S.

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